FERDINAND OF BULGARIA

THE AMAZING CAREER OF A SHODDY CZAR

By the Author of
"THE REAL KAISER"

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David [illegible] -
16 [illegible] Row 2 Calcutta

INTRODUCTORY

"WHO is that evil-looking Dago?" asked an Australian friend; "he looks as though he had never been outside a horse in his life."

We were gazing at the procession of royalties who followed the body of King Edward VII through his mourning capital. The Dago in question was Ferdinand, Czar of the Bulgarians; and one could not but recognize the truth of the Colonial's brutal description.

He wore, it may be remembered, an Astrakan cap and coat; and the day was a warm one. His fat figure swayed from side to side in the saddle, and he looked thoroughly frightened of the magnificent horse he bestrode with so ill a grace. The perspiration dropped down his flabby cheeks.

He was not in the sort of company where he was calculated to shine. All around him were princes who would not be seen speaking to him. The London crowd hardly knew who he was,

and betrayed less interest in him than it would have shown in the latest coloured monarch from the wilds of Africa.

His bright, shifty eyes turned here and there, vainly seeking something friendly and familiar. No doubt but Ferdinand made a poor showing on his last visit to London ; the very last, possibly, that he will ever be allowed to pay to the capital of the British Empire.

But I ventured at the time to predict to my friend from the Antipodes that he would one day hear a good deal more of Czar Ferdinand than he had hitherto learned. For though he was then an unconsidered personage in English-speaking countries, he already enjoyed quite another reputation upon the Continent of Europe.

I explained that he was half a Frenchman, and that in Paris, where notabilities are summed up more surely than anywhere else in the wide world, he was esteemed by no means a negligible quantity.

Berlin, I said, had already put him down as a man with a price, and was only seeking to find how great was the price that must be paid. Austria—the new Austria, as represented by the clever heir to the throne, Franz Ferdinand—still looked askance at him, but was determined to make him a friend before he should have returned to amity with Russia.

Russia had against his name the big black cross that is never obliterated in the secret archives of the White Empire, if the gossips of the Chancelleries are to be believed. Finally, in the Balkan States, still the slums of Europe by force of circumstances, he was the man to whom politicians looked for the next move.

I little guessed what world-shaking consequences were to derive from that move. But I was able to say enough to my friend to awaken in him a new interest in the man whom his sturdy Colonialism led him to describe as an "evil-looking Dago."

Since then I have seen Ferdinand in varying circumstances, all of which have tended to increase my interest in him, without in any way adding to the sum of my liking for him, and all that he represents.

I can see him now, riding into Sofia in triumph, with a wreath of green leaves around his head, and a band of victorious Bulgarian warriors as his escort. It was the first time Sofia had ever really acclaimed him, and he looked almost human as he acknowledged the ringing plaudits of a people that was wont to turn away its face as he rode by.

I remember him, too, in Paris; at Longchamps the day of the Grand Prix. The elaborate precautions made that day by the police to pre-

vent any of those untoward incidents of which he has lived in dread for a quarter of a century spoiled the whole day for the Parisians. It was impossible to move about the lawn without encountering cordons of gendarmes, placed there to afford a wide breathing space for the imitation Czar.

I also saw him at Carlsbad, very much at home among the Austrians, who are really the people of his choice. He maintained a monstrous state there, and his comings and goings were as good as any spectacle I have seen.

And always, wherever I encountered him, I heard stories. They were not nice stories, for he was the hero of them. But they represented the Continental opinion that he was distinctly a man of consequence; a man who would one day bulk big in the world's history.

All these stories threw a bright light on the character of the supposed useless fop, who made Bismarck reverse his first contemptuous estimate of him. The final judgment of the old cynic was that Ferdinand was "a sharp young fellow." They confounded entirely the British view of him, which has recently had to be revised.

For it is only too true that our attitude was that of the Rugby schoolboy. "We have heard of the Kaiser; and the Czar and the French

President are our good friends. But who on earth is King Ferdinand of Bulgaria?"

The answer is plain to be read. He is the parvenu of princes, the outcast among Kings, the Czar of Shoddy. His history and habits, his ambitions and abilities, his amusements and amours, as far as I have been able to trace them, are set out in the following chronicle.

A POT-HOUSE PRINCE

"*The Prince of Bulgaria, if there exists in the world a being unfortunate enough to take up that position.*"

—BISMARCK.

CHAPTER I

A POT-HOUSE PRINCE

ONE day in December, 1886, there slouched into Ronacher's Circus, a well-known Vienna beer garden, three weary Bulgarian politicians. Some weeks before they had left Sofia full of importance, and very pleased with themselves. In their ears were ringing the injunctions of Stambuloff, the "Bismarck of Bulgaria," and they were under no kind of misapprehension as to their mission.

They were to come back with a Prince, and not until they had got one dare they show their faces in Sofia again. He was to be a presentable Prince, young, wealthy, a soldier, and, above all, powerfully connected. It seemed easy enough to them, for they were patriotic Bulgarians, and thought that all the unoccupied Princes of Europe would compete for so proud a position as that of Prince of Bulgaria. Possibly their phantasy

was not shared by the wise old man who sent them out on their mission; for it is recorded that he grinned sardonically as he saw them go.

From Court to Court they went, hawking the vacant principality and receiving the most surprising rebuffs. They offered the place to the Grand Duke Vladimir of Russia, and he refused it with a rude promptness. Valdemar of Denmark listened to all they had to say, and said he would write and let them know. His answer was in the negative. From Prince Carol of Rumania they received a refusal startling in its emphasis. They rubbed their heads, and decided to try more tentative measures.

Hither and thither they went, hinting at the great opportunity that offered for an enterprising young Prince. Their overtures were everywhere received with a chilliness that was rigid in its iciness. They thought of grim old Stambuloff waiting at home for news, and trudged manfully on to another Court. Soon they realized that they were the laughing-stock of Europe.

So they found their way to Vienna, which was as near home as they dared to venture, and determined to spend a little time in a well-earned vacation from the task of Prince-hunting. Their steps were guided to the famous beer garden by a very pleasant acquaintance they had made in

the Austrian pleasure city; and there they rested, well content with a cool drink and a friendly chat.

And while they rested, there came on the scene a Major Laabe, to whom they were introduced by their Viennese friend, who was a smooth-spoken individual of slightly Jewish appearance. Major Laabe was an individual of quite another type, a dashing Austrian cavalry officer who knew everybody and everything. He was sympathetic to the travel-worn Bulgars, and over a bottle or two of wine they confided to him their mission, and its lack of result.

It was then that the Major sprang to his feet and slapped his deerskin riding breeches of spotless white in pure amazement and joy. "Why," he cried, "I know the very man you want; and by a strange coincidence he is here on this very spot. He is Ferdinand of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha, grandson of Louis Philippe of France, and cousin of every crowned head in Europe. He is a prime favourite of both the Emperor of Austria and the Czar of Russia. And, my boys, don't say I told you so, but he is as rich as Crœsus."

Grekoff, Galtcheff, and Stoiloff—such were the names of the three simple Bulgars—looked at one another with glistening eyes. It seemed too good to be true. "Come along with me," urged

the genial Major, "and be presented to him. He's just in here," and he led the way to the billiard-room.

There the eyes of the three men from Sofia fell upon a tall young man of twenty-six, who with a billiard cue in his hand, was walking round the table with a gait that was curious in its mincing affectation. He was clad in the uniform of an Austrian sub-lieutenant, and was really quite a beautiful thing in the way of princes.

His face was remarkable for its length, and for the cruel hook that marked the prominent nose. The eyes were bright with intelligence, the lips thin and set tight. And in his right eye he wore a monocle with a gilt rim, a rarer embellishment to a young man in those days than in these. As they watched him he posed for the shot—a difficult cannon—and made it with infinite skill and appearance of ease. Then moving to take his place for another shot, he let the monocle fall from his eye and turned and faced them squarely. But even then they noticed that he did not look at them.

Introductions were made, and soon the five men were seated at a table by a quiet bar, with opened bottles before them. In less than half an hour the three Bulgarians were offering this young exquisite the post which all the young

princes of Europe had refused in quick succession, and he was staring at them through his monocle with a regard in which shyness and impudence were blended.

At heart he was furious. He had been waiting for this offer for weeks. He and his mother had talked of nothing else. But these clods from the least civilized of the Balkan States had ignored him; had actually been unaware of his existence. So, as they eagerly set out the advantages of their offer, and pressed for its instant acceptance, he smiled sardonically, and framed the words of his answer.

When he delivered it, it filled them with dismay. Very quietly he expressed his sense of the honour they had done him, and of his own unworthiness for so important a post. Then he reminded them that the Powers of Europe must be consulted before he could safely accept. With remarkable cunning he made them feel that, should he accept, he would be doing them a favour. Then he dismissed them, greatly abashed.

Some months later, however, they were received at the Coburg palace in Vienna, and overwhelmed with flatteries by his clever old mother. Difficulties were discussed, their power to make the offer questioned, and a great show of wealth and influence, both of which the Princess Clemen-

tine certainly possessed, was made. Eventually an arrangement was reached whereby Stoiloff should visit the Princess's country palace at Ebenthal, bringing with him two influential Bulgarians of the mission, Vinaroff and Popoff.

This last was a stern old warrior and a keen judge of men. Ferdinand received them in a gorgeous reception-room, surrounded already by the state of a reigning prince. By a writing-table near the window sat the keen-faced old woman who had spent half her life to fulfil her ambition of seating her son upon a throne.

The ordeal was almost too much for Ferdinand. He stood there, affecting the ease he had acquired in his pilgrimages through the Courts of Europe. But old Popoff could smell the perfume with which he reeked, and could see the nervous trembling of his hands as he sought to evade his warrior eye. But for the inspiring presence of his mother, Ferdinand might have thrown away the chance for which his boyhood and young manhood had been spent. But he got through somehow; the offer was made and accepted, conditionally upon the consent of the Powers being given to it.

Then Ferdinand entered upon an experience as strange and disheartening as that of the men who had sought him out to make him prince. He found everywhere that the proposal was

received with a surprised distaste. Not all his mother's tact and influence could make anybody look upon the choice with a favourable eye. The only encouragement he got—if it was encouragement—came from Bismarck, whose advice to his predecessor arose in his mind at this crisis in his affairs.

"Take it!" said the cynical old Prussian to Alexander of Battenberg. "It will at least be a pleasant reminiscence."

Three weeks passed, and Stambuloff began to demand his prince most urgently. The argument about waiting for the consent of the Powers was ignored by the Statesman. Ferdinand was warned in unmistakable terms that the offer was only open for a few more days. He must come now, or never. Then, forgetting all his protestations that he would only accept if the Powers endorsed the choice of Bulgaria, Ferdinand went.

He went with a cant phrase in his mouth; he has spouted miles of such stuff in the quarter-century and more that has since elapsed. But this first piece of cant that fell from the lips of the new prince caused the Courts of Europe to smile and the Chancelleries to chuckle.

"I regard it as my sacred duty to set foot at the earliest possible moment on the soil of my new country."

Thus the Pot-house Prince, who bargained for a principality in a beer garden, and who was introduced to the first of his new subjects in a billiard-room through the mediation of a Jewish moneylender and a needy Austrian man-about-town.

But Ferdinand did not care; he had got the job which had been dangled before his eyes since first he could remember. He had fulfilled his mother's dearest wish, and got his foot in among the Rulers of Europe.

THE TRAINING OF A TRAITOR

"*He lived in an atmosphere of womanly luxury, so that sweet perfumes and pretty flowers became necessaries of life to him.*"

CHAPTER II

THE TRAINING OF A TRAITOR

FERDINAND owed his principality to his mother, Princess Clementine of Orleans, the youngest and cleverest daughter of the French King Louis Philippe. He owed also his capacity for filling the position to the training bestowed upon him by that truly remarkable woman. It was a peculiar training, for he was trained to fill a hypothetical throne. Make a king of him, was his mother's motto, and the kingdom is sure to turn up some day.

Clementine of Orleans was one of the stormy petrels of European inner politics. "The Czar's nightmare, the Austrian Emperor's bogey, and Bismarck's sleeping draught" had been the epigrammatic description of the rôle she played, thrown off after deep consideration by an English diplomatist who worked out his impromptus very thoroughly.

She had married Prince Augustus of Saxe-Coburg Kohary, and by the Kohary hangs a tale. It was supposed by the vulgar to be an additional title, but it really was an excrescence on the Saxe-Coburg appellation, tacked on in return for some millions in hard cash. The original Kohary was a swindling army contractor whose name in England would be Cohen. He had made untold wealth by a system of army contracting which has its feeble imitators at the present day, and he cherished high ambitions for his pretty daughter Tony.

She, and her wealth, attracted the notice of that poverty-stricken prince, Ferdinand of Saxe-Coburg, grandfather of Bulgaria's elect. The wedding and the dowry were arranged, and the condition exacted by the man of millions was that the Kohary should appear in the princely title. So it was; though Prince Augustus, at the instigation of his spouse Clementine, dropped the Cohen as soon as he conscientiously could. But there it was, and when, many years afterwards, Ferdinand of Bulgaria was able to address a deputation of Jewish merchants in their native Yiddish, gossips recalled a circumstance which explained why he was the only European ruler who could claim such an accomplishment.

But the Princess Clementine moved in a circle that had the discernment to see that the brand



Ferdinand's Mother, Princess Clementine, at the age of 82.

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of Kohary was not upon her. She bore rather the stamp of the Bourbons, and to the very last of her extreme old age preserved the aristocratic air that became a daughter of Louis Philippe. She inherited immense wealth, and knew how to take care of it. Two passions possessed her in her life. The first was to restore the monarchical line in France, and to that end she plotted skilfully and unsuccessfully. The other was to realize in the person of her youngest son a prophecy that affected her most profoundly when it was delivered, and obtained a greater hold upon her with each succeeding year of her life.

The prophecy was delivered by a very old and unsightly gipsy woman who cajoled the Princess into permitting an inspection of her hand. The sybil declared that one of the sons of Clementine would one day reign a crowned king. The forecast was in accordance with the ambition and training of this remarkable woman, who at once decided that Ferdinand, the youngest and brightest of her boys, must be the instrument of its fulfilment.

She had sat at the feet of the most astute statesmen of her time, and had earned the appellation of "a Talleyrand in petticoats." Those who knew her best believed fondly that she was beyond all delusions; they learned their error when they found what schemes she was cherishing

for the unlovable Ferdinand. She set her heart upon a throne for him, though what throne she could not even dimly discern.

The kind of education this boy received from the sparkling, cynical, witty Frenchwoman can be imagined. Every step of his career is eloquent of the lessons he learned, and of how well he learned them. She taught him that love was a weak passion, since it gave some clinging woman the right to impose herself as a burden upon a strong man. She taught him the value of influential friends, and how to take any amount of snubbing from any one who might eventually be of use to him.

From Court to Court of Europe she dragged him at an age when most boys are immersed in manly sports and the hard regime of ordinary education. He became the most accomplished young prince in all Europe in the matter of modern languages, though by a strange oversight she never caused him to learn Bulgarian. He knew everybody, and was seen everywhere. Not one of his great pack of relatives escaped his acquaintance; she insinuated to them, one and all, that in his case the claims of consanguinity could not be overlooked.

She inspired in him a feminine horror of being deceived. To this day he dreads that possibility more than anything else, save only assassination.

No better training in the art of deception could possibly be devised than to keep a youth constantly on the look-out for deception. At a comparatively early age Ferdinand became a past master in all the arts of simulation and deceit.

The masculine side of his education was neglected. He never learned to play games like other boys; he never learned the ordinary accomplishment of princes, the mastery of a horse. He lived in an atmosphere of womanly luxury, so that sweet perfumes and pretty flowers became necessaries of life to him.

He was by nature a fop. All the arts of dandyism were practised by him, his clothes affected his gait. He flitted from Court to Court, and the more formal the Court the greater his admiration for it. Display was to him a part of kingship; one of the most tangible and real attributes of royalty.

Thus, although he had not the most remote hope of legitimate succession to a throne, at twenty he was possessed of a complete theory of kingship. His mother, who appraised the whole world at its most just value, and could discriminate between the instant value of a King of England and a Czar of Russia, gave to him the undiscriminating worship that she denied to any other human being, even in a

fractional degree. But there was no sign of the throne for which he had been so carefully trained.

Therefore, at the age of twenty Ferdinand had to join the Austrian Army as a sub-lieutenant. He was no soldier by nature, and his training had unfitted him for the vocation in a marked degree. He had inherited a nervous disposition, that made the occupation selected for him a lifelong misery. His first commission was in a cavalry regiment, but his execrable horsemanship soon caused him to be transferred to a foot regiment. It was as a lieutenant of Jaegers that he was apparelled on that memorable day when the tired Bulgarian envoys first saw him in the Vienna beer garden.

The clever old woman and the calculating young man had been expecting them. The net was spread and richly baited from the millions of Clementine. All that money and cunning could do to win him the vacant princedom had been done. The result has already been told.

His mother trained Ferdinand for a throne, and her influence and her wealth made for him the opportunity. As his story is unfolded, we shall see her continually at his elbow, prompting him in all the tangled affairs of his statecraft. Her love for him never waned, and to the last he was the object of adoration of the most



sophisticated woman that ever adorned a Court in Europe.

Her death deprived him of the best counsellor and the most powerful friend that such a prince has ever been known to possess. The gap it left in his councils will be illustrated in the course of this narrative. She died in her beloved Vienna in February, 1907, at the age of eighty-nine. Her three sons, Ferdinand of Bulgaria, Augustus son-in-law of the deposed Emperor of Brazil, and Philip, son-in-law of King Leopold of the Belgians, stood at her bedside as she passed away.

The thing she had lived to bring about had not yet come to pass. Ferdinand made himself Czar of the Bulgarians in 1908. The poor old Princess died just a year too soon.

LEARNING THE ROPES

"*The position is not particularly brilliant, but where is a better one to be found? I am a reigning Prince.*"—FERDINAND OF BULGARIA.

CHAPTER III

LEARNING THE ROPES

WHEN Ferdinand found it was his "sacred duty" to occupy the vacant Principality without loss of time, he disguised himself and fled from Vienna. His initial disguise was that of a Viennese cab-driver, but he changed several times before he arrived in Sofia disguised as a Bulgarian general. He has lived a substantial portion of his life in various disguises since that day.

If one had any pity to spare for such a malignant creature, one might almost pity him his first experiences in Bulgaria. The Bulgars did not know him, but his reputation had preceded him from the mouth of that Popoff who had inspected him so critically in the reception-room of his mother's summer palace. The envoys were bombarded with questions on their return, and those most responsible for the choice mustered up

enough courage to describe him as "most diplomatic."

This was hardly what the Bulgars had been led to expect, and the wise men noted that Popoff held his speech. This led to direct questions, and Popoff let out his opinion. "Pah!" says he, "scented like a civet." And the Bulgarians, who make scent but do not use it, never forgot the description.

Ferdinand had been elected to fill the shoes of a prince who had been kidnapped for his virtues and abilities. The dashing Alexander of Battenberg is a popular hero of his people, a warrior Prince whom the rough Bulgarian peasants could understand and love. There comes to take his place a finicking, fine gentleman with an eyeglass in his eye, who shows up in the capital for the first time in a general's uniform, but riding in a carriage. As a matter of fact, he was in such a state of nervous terror that it would not have been safe to let him mount a horse.

And what a country for such an exquisite to rule! Bulgaria in 1915 is bad enough, but words fail to paint the primitive savagery of the country in 1887. Sofia, the capital, was little more than a glorified village, and the new Prince bumped hideously over the ruts in the streets as his carriage passed to the palace. Nearly twenty years later, one of the most tactful great ladies

of Europe, wishing to pay Ferdinand a compliment on the great improvement wrought in his capital since his accession, said sweetly:

"I do love Sofia, the railway makes it so easy to run over to Vienna for a little gaiety."

But even that reason for leaving Sofia did not exist when this cuckoo Prince first drove down its main street.

Bulgarian was one of the few languages his mother had not added to his list of accomplishments, and his hope that his perfect French would carry him through triumphantly was only partly justified. He found many of the most important men of State knew no language but their own, and these he failed to comprehend as completely as they him.

The motley races of this Principality were of all colours and creeds. Bulgars, Serbians, gipsies, Turks, Circassians, Jews, Armenians, Tartars, Russians, Rumanians, Albanians, then as now, were all huddled together cheek by jowl. They were all as strange to him as would have been a race of Maoris. But if he felt any misgivings about his new rôle in life he did not display them. Indeed, he was ready with a cant explanation of his acceptance of the responsibility, and of his flight from Vienna in an ignoble guise.

"I did not seek the Bulgarian crown. It was offered to me with the assurance that I could do

much good in the country. The mission was a noble one, and I accepted it."

His idea of Royalty was centred in the stateliest pageants of the most formal Courts of Europe. He had had a wide experience of Courts, and knew exactly the extreme of outward show that was employed to hedge the greatest monarchs of Christendom. He established a ceremonial that outdid them all. It was Ferdinand's way of asserting his own importance in a principality where the Prince was treated like an idle and worthless schoolboy.

For Bulgaria had a real ruler, in spite of the kidnapping of its first prince and the appointment of a half-pay lieutenant to take his place. He was a little, fat, dirty man, the son of an innkeeper named Stambuloff. One can measure Bulgarian character by the stamp of the greatest man Bulgaria has yet produced. Stambuloff, the patriot statesman, was not ashamed to admit that he made Sofia the Bulgarian capital, because he owned large holdings of land there, and could reap a fortune from the circumstance.

And before his coronation as Prince of Bulgaria Ferdinand had a sufficing taste of the mastery of this overlord who ruled his new subjects with a rod of iron. The Prince had designed his own coronation robe, a tasteful garment in purple and ermine that became him marvellously.

Nicely scented, and jewelled in admirable taste, he encountered his Prime Minister, who was smoking a black cigar that smelt like the burning of old boots—what the Americans call a cooking cigar—and displayed a liberal portion of Bulgarian soil under his long finger-nails.

Stambuloff looked him over with a loud snort. "I cannot, and will not, be seen with you, if you don't take that rubbish off," he shouted; and then as a malicious afterthought added: "Why not spend the money on a trusty body-guard?" And the ruffian laughed aloud as Ferdinand went livid in his gorgeous purple and ermine robe. For it was an open secret that Bulgaria held no terror for Ferdinand to compare with his fear of assassination.

But even the fear of assassination could not scare him off his uneasy throne. "Mon Dieu!" said he. "As they leave me here I will remain. The position is not particularly brilliant, but where is a better one to be found? I am a reigning prince. I have a pretty good civil list, and rather pleasant shooting. I might as well be here as anywhere else." There, you see, is the real Ferdinand, with his habitual cant phrases laid aside for once.

And he soon found an occupation that pleased him infinitely, and filled in the gaps of his time very pleasantly while he was making acquain-

tance with the language and customs of Bulgaria. He occupied himself with the organization of such a secret police service as has disgraced no other country in the nineteenth century. The ranks of this precious service were recruited from handy foreigners who had established themselves in Bulgaria for some time. In that service promotion was rapid—provided that the agent was a good and trustworthy assassin.

He paid these worthies out of his own pocket, and their work was the constant espionage on all the leading men of Bulgaria. Thus he got acquainted with all the peccadilloes of the men who governed the country for him, while they despised the scented dandy who came among them with such show of royal state.

Where real misbehaviour could not be discovered, imaginary offences were invented in plenty, and Ferdinand soon had evidence against every man of any importance in his realm. How he made use of these secret dossiers can well be imagined. Those most guilty were made his tools by threats of exposure and punishment, and he gathered around him the support of the worst blackguards in Bulgaria.

This work provided congenial employment for the young Prince, who had been nurtured on the morals of Machiavelli and the traditions of Talleyrand. His spies made Sofia the most

uncomfortable city for the stranger that Europe possessed, but the habitués of the place paid little heed to his army of Mouchards. For even before the coming of Ferdinand, the customs of the Bulgarian capital were nothing very nice.

And thus Ferdinand learned the language of his subjects, and added his own little improvements to their customs and traditions. But there was something that worried him beyond the boundaries of his principality, and as it worried his devoted mother even more, it soon began to occupy the whole of his attention.

For the Powers of Europe would not recognize his appointment as Prince of Bulgaria.

THE MAN WHO WOULD BE KING

" *What! My nephew Ferdinand! But it is so long since I have seen you that, like the Powers, I did not recognize you.*"—Duc d'Aumale.

CHAPTER IV

THE MAN WHO WOULD BE KING

WHEN Ferdinand was elected Prince of Bulgaria by the Sobranje, and signed the Constitution, no one of the Powers of Europe recognized his sovereignty. On the other hand, the Sultan of Turkey declared his position illegal within a week of his signing the Constitution, and none of his Royal relatives and supposed backers disputed the attitude of the Turk.

Now to be King in one's own country, even if outsiders do not recognize the kingship, is at least a position of importance. And, more common still, to be recognized as king by the whole world when the kingship is bounded by the mere title is at least honorific. But Ferdinand, having accepted a position as reigning Prince, was not recognized as Prince outside his own realm, and had only those attributes of Royalty in Bulgaria which he chose to assume for himself.

The real ruling was done by a fat, cross man, who treated him with open contempt.

The position was an intolerable one for Ferdinand, and for his proud mother as well. Together they plotted how they might end it, and for years left no stone unturned to obtain recognition from the Powers of Europe. They knew the way quite well; it was only necessary that one Great Power should recognize his position, and the rest would follow as a matter of course.

Behold our Ferdinand, then, flitting from Court to Court of Europe in search of a friendly lead.

Austria seemed to him and his mother the most likely place, but the Emperor Francis Joseph proved a stiffer obstacle than they had reckoned for. When he was earnestly approached on the subject, the Emperor gave an uncompromising refusal couched in the most compromising terms. "Besides being an Emperor, I am also an honest man; and I deal only with honest men."

Then he swung to the other extreme of the pendulum, and paid his court to Russia. The result of this manœuvre was a blunt intimation that he must not even seek a pretext for paying a visit to Petrograd. There were many reasons why Russia should desire to keep him among the outsiders, and the religious one was among the

most obvious. Ferdinand was a superstitious, if not a devout, Roman Catholic, ruling a people whose official religion was the Orthodox Church. He had been refused allegiance by the head of the Bulgarian Church, the Patriarch Clement, who had suffered imprisonment in consequence.

With a sigh, mother and son admitted there was small hope at present of Russia.

Then they turned hopeful eyes on England. He had a sentimental claim upon Queen Victoria, as a Coburg Prince who was born in the very year in which the Prince Consort died. Be sure, this little sentimental memory was kept alive by the astute Princess Clementine. As a small boy, he wrote childish letters in the best English he could muster, and at frequent intervals. As a man, he employed to her his best bedside manner, which few old ladies could resist, and which impressed her so strongly that at his wedding she described him as an "enjoleur"—a beguiler. Wherefore he has since borne the nickname of the "Fat Charmer."

But he got very little out of shrewd Queen Victoria, except a present of a pug dog, of which he made a great fuss. He had it fattened beyond even the stoutness and wheeziness of the ordinary pug, and declared that it was his mascot. Whenever he entertained English notabilities, he made a point of speaking with affectionate reverence

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of "Her Most Gracious," as he used to call her. And, as he pronounced the words, a tender moisture obscured his light blue eyes, and just enough huskiness gave them a reverential flavour that was most impressive.

His worldly mother entertained greater hopes of King Edward, then Prince of Wales. The pair used to lay in wait for him at Marienbad, where our late King regarded them in the same light as the mineral water—unpleasant, but part of the cure. He entertained them and was entertained, but those who knew him most intimately could not master their smiles when any significance was attached to this complaisance. Tactful and wise as he ever was, our King Edward gave no offence, but raised no hopes.

He even went to Constantinople, where he had to wear a red fez as a symbol of the Sultan's overlordship.

Paris, too, saw a great deal of him through these years of seeking recognition. Each year he spent some time in the French capital, behaving in an effusive manner, that on one occasion nearly involved him in a sound kicking. His mother still had great influence in the city of her birth, but it was the wrong kind of influence for Ferdinand. He was more admired than liked by the French, who were the first to appreciate the real nature of his character.

It was in Paris that he incurred the snub that made him vow that he would never set foot in the city again; and part of the bitterness was contained in the fact that the snub was administered by his own uncle, the Duc d'Aumale. He had left the opera, and betook himself to a very exclusive café for some of those good things of life which he knows well how to appreciate. Amid the brilliant company assembled, he noticed the Duc d'Aumale, whom he approached familiarly, holding out his hand with easy confidence.

The old nobleman looked at him curiously, as at a stranger whom he had never before seen.

"What, uncle, don't you know me?" he cried. "It is I, your nephew Ferdinand."

"What! My nephew Ferdinand! But it is so long since I have seen you that, like the Powers, I did not recognize you."

So Ferdinand wandered from one Court to another, seeking the friendly lead, and meeting with nothing but much sly laughter. At home in Bulgaria he knew better than to expect any sympathy. His strong man Stambuloff was intent in holding off Russia on one side and Turkey on the other, with a watchful eye between whiles on Austria. He did not care whether the Prince of Bulgaria were recognized or not, so long as Bulgaria itself remained intact and progressive. Sometimes he interfered with Ferdinand's

schemes when they seemed to him to endanger his own. For instance, Ferdinand, on some pretext or other of state, sought to impose himself on the Court at Petrograd at a time most inconvenient for Stambuloff. The innkeeper's son warned the Coburg Prince most promptly that if he crossed the frontier outwards he would most certainly not be allowed to cross it on the return journey. So Ferdinand stayed in Sofia.

Then Clementine had an inspiration; Ferdinand, now a bachelor in the thirties, must marry. A good marriage would give him strong enough influence in some particular direction to force the recognition which was now her whole reason for continuing to exist.

Whereupon the Fat Charmer set out on a new pilgrimage. Ferdinand in search of a wife.

THE COMPLEAT BACHELOR

" *Ferdinand is like the traditional British sailor : he has a wife in every one of his ports of refuge.*"—STAMBULOFF.

CHAPTER V

THE COMPLEAT BACHELOR

THE young Prince Ferdinand had received almost daily lessons from his mother on the part that women were apt to play in his life. She, the Princess Clementine, his own mother, shrank from no sacrifice when advancing his pursuit of some vacant throne. She held no claim to consideration as compared to the great life object she set before him and herself. And she was determined that no woman breathing should live to become a hindrance to the quest.

Imagine, then, what teaching Ferdinand received, when still an innocent child, about women from the lips of one of the cleverest women that ever lived. No illusions for him, no charming boyish enthusiasm for angels of earth. He had it drilled into him at every hour of the day that for the benefit of great princes like him all women existed—yes, even his own mother. Women were to be courted, wheedled, used, seduced;

but not honoured. No tender feeling was ever to enter his mind in connexion with a woman, for that way led to the path of self-sacrifice. And Ferdinand must sacrifice others, never himself.

The weaker side of feminine character was exposed to him by many an object lesson, for the young Ferdinand was brought up in an atmosphere almost essentially feminine. At sixteen he was more cynical about the sex than many a roué of sixty. The doctrine of woman's eternal pursuit of the male had been so drummed into his ears that he regarded everything in petticoats as a prospective burden upon himself. He told himself everlastingly that he must allow no tender feeling for any woman to occupy his mind, else he would be saddled with a burden for life.

He went from capital to capital with his mother, glancing appraisingly at women of every degree in life, and having his premature adventures with the precautions and blasé indifference of a tired man of the world. He formed a style of conversation for feminine company, in which a brilliant form of double meaning predominated. He wielded his weapon so skilfully that a pure woman, even an understanding one, had no defence against it. The other kind were dazzled by the proficiency of



At the age of 22.



At the Coronation of Czar Alexander III.



At the time of his election as Prince of Bulgaria.



At the opening of the first Sobranje.

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this mere youth in innuendo of the vilest kind, wrapped up so skilfully that even the most alert mind hesitated before its ambiguities.

He shocked, but he also captivated; and he was firm in never himself becoming a captive. He soon earned the reputation he sought, he was credited with being as fickle as he was successful in love affairs. He left behind him in the capitals of Europe a trail of broken hearts and broken promises; and his mother approved the firmness of his procedure. She never had to accuse him of one generous impulse, where women were concerned. In this matter he was her devoted pupil.

So he came to the throne of Bulgaria with no encumbrances at all; no favourite to offend the ladies of the Bulgarian Court, no dancer in a gorgeous villa very near the Palace. The rôle of a bachelor Prince suited him admirably, and he settled down at Sofia and Varna in that capacity.

Of course, there were scandals. The Prince wished above all things to become possessed of the secrets of the most powerful of his subjects. What better way of worming them out than by means of a love affair with a wife here or a sister there? It was so easy afterwards, when the required information had been gained, to explain that his passion had been simulated and that

the lady had deceived herself. Then affairs of State would call Ferdinand to Paris or Carlsbad, where there was fresh wooing to be done. In the meantime the little affair at Sofia had time to blow over.

But chickens have a habit of coming home to roost, even in the palaces of princes. The very real indifference which Ferdinand displayed to all women when his end had been won was well calculated to arouse the deepest sentiment in the minds of some of the sex. He had more difficulty in shaking off some of his conquests than he had ever expected, and remote as the city of Sofia is, and undesirable to women of the gay world, he could not escape the attentions of his infatuated cast-offs even there.

In some cases the result was expensive to a Prince who inculcated generosity in others by refusing any display of it on his own part. In at least one instance, an adventure begun lightly enough by him ended in a tragedy which cast a shadow on the throne itself. Ferdinand owns large estates in Hungary, where he loves to go for hunting expeditions, under the title of Count Murany, a favourite alias of his. In Budapest he encountered and wooed Anne Simon, one of the most beautiful actresses of her day, and a great favourite in the Hungarian capital.

Ferdinand ended the adventure after his

approved style, leaving the lady with a jeer at her credulity, and a compliment at the high art of her tragic acting. The passionate gipsy woman pursued him to Sofia, and refused to be shaken off. Soon her claim upon the bachelor prince, and the open eagerness with which she pressed it, became the scandal of Sofia.

The task of getting rid of her he confided to his aide-de-camp, Captain Boitscheff, who bungled the business sorely. Anne Simon raised such violent objection and resistance to the peaceful abduction which the aide-de-camp had planned that he lost his temper. Next day the dead body of the actress was found in a mean street of Sofia, disfigured by knife wounds.

Anne Simon had many friends, including some at the Austrian Court, and Ferdinand's pursuit of her had been a matter of notoriety in Hungary. Sofia, then as now, teemed with Austrian Secret Service men, and the whole story was known to the Emperor within three days of the tragedy. Francis characterized Ferdinand as a felon, with whom no decent person could associate. He went further, and demanded the arrest and trial of the captain.

The latter took refuge in the palace itself, and was dragged to prison from the very table of his princely patron. The trial was a stern one, and as the evidence was indisputable he

was sentenced to death. The sentence was commuted by Ferdinand to imprisonment for life, and that sentence the aide-de-camp is still nominally serving. But he entertains his friends at elaborate luncheon parties, and may be seen in the box of the theatre or in any gay resort of Sofia that may happen to attract him. His name has not been removed from the Bulgarian army list, and every one knows that his sentence of imprisonment is a long-played farce.

So for eight years, Ferdinand played the congenial rôle of the bachelor Prince. His character was well known to his own subjects, though he contrived to prevent the worst of the stories against him from general circulation in Europe. The methods he employed were cynically effective. A prominent gutter journalist of his capital accused him in print of sins unmentionable here, and compared to which the conduct I have sketched is mere youthful indulgence. Ferdinand put him on the pension list and closed his mouth forever.

His predecessor, Prince Alexander of Battenberg, had married an actress, and as long as he lived, Ferdinand had nothing to fear from rival aspirants to his throne. But the time came when that unhappy Prince paid the debt of his bravery and his rash virtues; and the death of Alexander pointed attention to the fact that there was no

heir to the throne on which Ferdinand was now firmly seated.

Clementine said it was time that he married, and, like a dutiful son, Ferdinand set off with her in search of a princess. All the humiliations he had previously endured were as nothing compared to the slights heaped upon the Fat Charmer in search of a wife.

THE BROKEN-HEARTED PRINCESS

"*If any woman ever died of a broken heart, it was the Princess Marie Louise of Bulgaria.*"—"SVOBODA."

CHAPTER VI

THE BROKEN-HEARTED PRINCESS

WE have seen Ferdinand waiting for a Crown to turn up. We have seen him striving vainly for a friendly lead to recognition as a Sovereign Prince by the Powers of Europe. Now this Micawber among Monarchs is revealed as waiting anxiously and servilely for a suitable bride to appear. And in the search for a wife he endured the most poignant humiliations that have overtaken even him in a long life spent in eating dirt.

Ambitious Clementine wished him to espouse a princess who would not only furnish an heir to the throne, but would bring influence to his palace, and help materially in the long quest for recognition. But the princesses of Europe, and the advisers who guided their choice of a consort, looked with disdain upon the princely parvenu. Queen Victoria, who was amused at his flattering speech and grand airs, drew the

line at an alliance with a prince whose tenure of the throne was so doubtful as that of Ferdinand's.

That he may have expected; but the conduct of the smaller kingdoms filled him with surprise and resentment. He might not aspire anywhere, and the fact was conveyed to him in a fashion so unmistakable that he was at the utmost pains to conceal his deep chagrin.

Finally a match was made for him by his mother. The victim was a dear little meek soul, a devout Catholic, and one of the gentlest spirits of her time—Princess Marie Louise of Parma, a niece of the Comte de Chambord. She was remarkably beautiful in a tiny way, with reddish-brown hair, large blue eyes, and a simple dignity that won all hearts.

The wedding took place at Lianore, in Lucca, and old Stambuloff paid the Princess the rare compliment of leaving his close watch on the affairs of Bulgaria long enough to attend the wedding. He was charmed with the sweet, pleasant girl of twenty-three, and in a message to her father declared "Bulgaria will honour and watch over her." As far as he could, he kept the promise he made on that occasion.

Stambuloff was just as anxious to see Ferdinand wedded as was Clementine. "We want a dynasty," he urged on Ferdinand, "and our



Princess Marie Louise of Bulgaria.

enemies want you to remain a bachelor. As long as you are unmarried you are in danger of assassination, and we are in danger of anarchy. When you are once married and possessed of a son and heir, they will not try to kill you. But even if you are assassinated, it won't matter to us then." It was frankness of this kind which endeared his Premier to Ferdinand.

The Sultan Abdul had the grace to telegraph congratulations to Ferdinand on the occasion of his marriage. "You have strengthened the Bulgarian Principality," he declared, with other courteous phrases, all of which Ferdinand read as a reminder of his state of vassalage.

The Duke of Parma made one condition of importance when giving his consent to the wedding. He insisted that the children of the marriage should be baptized into the Catholic Church, and should be brought up in that faith. Ferdinand himself was a Catholic, if he was anything at all, and the condition was therefore the more reasonable. But the official religion of Bulgaria is, of course, the Orthodox Church, and the masses are bigoted in their adherence to that faith.

The real difficulty lay in an article of the Bulgarian Constitution that provided that the heir to the throne must be baptized according to the rites of the Orthodox Church. This

difficulty was met by Stambuloff in his own downright fashion. He annulled it, to the horror of the Bulgarian Churchmen, and made the marriage possible.

The Princess won the hearts of her new subjects from the very moment of her arrival in Bulgaria. She had the sympathetic notion to enter the Principality attired in the costume of an ordinary Bulgarian woman, and it became her girlish beauty charmingly. Her frank unaffected interest in all she saw, her gracious acceptance of the little gifts, and the somewhat boorish homage paid her on her journey, gave her a reputation that preceded her to Sofia. She retained the instant popularity she won till the day of her death six years later. She was as much loved in Bulgaria as Ferdinand was detested.

The treatment accorded her by her husband, almost from the day of her wedding, was well calculated to shrivel such a gentle soul, and to extinguish the spark of life in so frail a frame. The absurd formality of his Court imposed upon her tasks that wearied her almost to unconsciousness. She had nothing in common with her crafty, ambitious husband, who had taken her into a nightmare land where assassination and worse horrors lurked perpetually in the dark corners of the magnificent palaces she occupied.

Four children she bore him in six years. Once she left him, as a protest against the shameless breach of the conditions under which she consented to wed him. During that period of separation her friends and relatives made public details of the torture of her married life that left Ferdinand's callous nature exposed to the full gaze of the world.

It was told how, in order to punish one of her favourite Court ladies for some indiscretion of speech, Ferdinand rose to his feet, and remained standing for over an hour. This imposed a standing posture upon the whole of the Court, including the Princess, who had but lately become a mother. The whole Court looked on in horror as this fragile flower grew whiter and whiter in her robes of State, maintaining herself in an upright position with the acme of physical effort.

Unheeding her sufferings, Ferdinand held grimly on, and when she finally fell fainting into the arms of one of her ladies, watched her removal from the chamber with unmoved grimness. That is only one among thousands of instances of refined cruelty alleged against him and credited by his subjects. Little wonder that as he drove through the streets of Sofia the people turned away their faces, unwilling even to look upon so mean-spirited a domestic tyrant.

I shall presently give the details of the blas-

phemous breach of faith that caused her to leave him, and nearly brought about his excommunication at the hands of the Pope. In the end she was persuaded to return to him, but she did not long survive the reunion. She never rose after the death-birth of her fourth child, the Princess Nadejda, and terminated her unhappy life at the age of thirty.

The real cause of her death was the blow inflicted upon her gentle piety when Ferdinand caused the infant Prince Boris, the heir to the throne, to forswear the faith of his ancestors on both sides at an age when the very meaning of the ceremony was hidden from the child. It was a step which Ferdinand had not even dared to take in his own person. Advantageous as adherence to the Orthodox Church could be to him, his superstitious fears prevented him from the blasphemy he imposed upon a child of three. Let us examine his reasons and excuses for the crime which broke the heart of the unhappy Princess Marie Louise of Parma.

AN APOSTATE BY PROXY

"*It is my duty to lay on the altar of the Fatherland the greatest and heaviest of sacrifices.*"—FERDINAND OF BULGARIA.

CHAPTER VII

AN APOSTATE BY PROXY

BORIS TIRNOVSKI, heir to the throne of Bulgaria, was christened in the Roman Catholic faith, according to the terms of the wedding contract, which had necessitated an amendment of the Bulgarian Constitution. But the ceremony gave a fresh offence to Russia, the nation which is champion of the Orthodox Church, and which was at that time the Power from which Ferdinand had most to hope.

Even when this christening took place he had in his mind an act which would be even a more effective conciliation to Russia than the original christening of his heir in the Orthodox faith would have been. He determined to make the child renounce the faith of his fathers, and embrace the official religion of Bulgaria.

The way to this apostasy was smoothed by a mission to Petrograd, undertaken by the ex-

Metropolitan Clement, whom Stambuloff put in gaol for refusing allegiance to Ferdinand. That Catholic Prince gave the rebellious prelate strong encouragement in his mission, and received him on his return with the honours usually accorded to a victorious general. Then followed the important step of re-amending the Constitution.

In a letter to the Czar Ferdinand announced his intention of re-baptizing little Boris in the Orthodox faith, and the Czar, having negotiated the matter through Clement, graciously consented to be the godfather of the infant apostate. "For the Czar's condescension the Prince will submit to any humiliation," said Stambuloff once, and this event proved how rightly he had estimated the Prince whom he had created.

In a proclamation to the Bulgarian people, that is terrible in its terms of slavery, he announced that the Czar had not only graciously consented to become the godfather to the heir, but that he had "manifested his goodwill to our nation by renewing with it the political relations that had been interrupted." Then he organized a great national raree-show at Tirnovo, the ancient capital of Bulgaria, where the re-christening took place on February 26.

Tirnovo was crowded with Russians of all degrees for the occasion, and for their benefit

were organized the throngs of Bulgarian peasants in national costume who paraded the streets singing the old Bulgarian folk-songs, and displaying the entwined banners of the two countries. These good folk danced the old Bulgarian dances, which they had just learned with an immensity of labour, in the market-place of the ancient city, and then sang the Russian National Anthem in conjunction with their own.

The ceremony in Tirnovo Cathedral was a pitiful business. The poor little heir to the throne, not yet three years of age, was torn from the arms of his mother, who protested with all the force of which her character was capable, and dressed all in white for the baptism. He stood all alone at the altar, a pathetic, uncomprehending little figure, and was made to renounce the faith in which he had been christened.

So Ferdinand committed apostasy by proxy. The official representative of the Czar-godfather, who was accorded royal honours in Tirnovo that day, afterwards described the ceremony as "a blasphemous mockery and an exhibition of political legerdemain." But Ferdinand cared little for what was said of him. The Sobranje voted to the heir to the throne a sum of £20,000, and the old accusation that he was leading the nation from Orthodoxy to Catholicism was for ever stilled.

Having appeased Russia and confirmed the ancient religion of his subjects in the person of the heir to the throne, Ferdinand was to reap the benefit of his perjury by receiving the long-awaited recognition of his sovereign Lord Abdul the Damned. The Red Sultan issued a firman, recognizing him as Prince of Bulgaria, with the title of Royal Highness, and as Governor-General of Eastern Rumelia.

Meantime the young mother had fled, taking her second son with her. She made her way, almost dead with grief, to her ancestral home, where she claimed the protection of her father. Enraged by Ferdinand's open violation of the wedding contract, the Duke of Parma espoused her cause with all the vigour of which he was capable, and received the full support of the Church.

Ferdinand was most anxious to end the scandal, and to coax the Princess back to Sofia. With that end in view he obeyed a summons issued by Pope Leo XIII, which, as a good Catholic, he would have had some difficulty in ignoring. Strong in the virtue of his princely rank, and in the dignity of a recent interview with the Sultan of Turkey, a Pagan potentate, in which Ferdinand sported the red fez of vassaldom, Ferdinand made his way to Rome with a quiet confidence in his own rectitude and his mother's influence.

He entered the Vatican for his interview with every appearance of smirking self-satisfaction. The interview was but a short one; it lasted only a few minutes, but much can happen in a few minutes. No other man was present, and there is no record of what took place at the meeting.

But when Ferdinand sneaked out of the presence, abashed and humiliated, and fled from Rome with no word; when months passed before he entirely recovered the jauntiness of his demeanour, it needs no great quality of imagination to guess that he received a notable rebuke. For some years he endured the stern displeasure of Rome, and the ban, almost amounting to excommunication was only lifted many years later at the strongly expressed wish of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir to the Austrian throne, whose assassination was the signal for the great world conflict in which we are still engaged.

The Princess never recovered from that blow. In course of time she was induced to return to her husband, bringing with her the child Cyril. But now she was a drooping flower, with no hope of ever reviving. She walked through the weary round of her Court duties, and bore two daughters to the father who had made of his son and heir an apostate. She only lived one

day after the birth of the second girl, when this gentle woman died of her wrongs.

But Ferdinand was satisfied. He had made his peace with Russia, and the Red Sultan called him Royal Highness. He was now on the side of the clerical plotters of his kingdom, and wore the hall-mark of Bulgarian ecclesiasticism. He even talked of giving his own open adherence to the Orthodox Church, though this has never been done.

In the meantime he had provided an Orthodox heir to the throne, and by the act had mitigated the dread of assassination that had for so long hag-ridden him. For assassination was ever the terror that haunted Ferdinand's mind. He lived for ever with the dread spectre at his elbow, and he had reason for his dread. For, as we shall now see, assassination was a familiar political weapon in Bulgaria before the arrival of Ferdinand, who can claim credit for remarkable improvements upon the crude methods in vogue before his era of subsidized slaughter.

THE BUTCHERED "BISMARCK"

"*If any ordinary citizen of any State had been so incriminated as Prince Ferdinand has been, the man would have been arrested.*"—"VOSSISCHE ZEITUNG."

CHAPTER VIII

THE BUTCHERED "BISMARCK"

THE outstanding instance of Ferdinand's intimacy with the grosser forms of assassination is the murder of Stepan Stambuloff, "the Bismarck of the Balkans." This gross little being was a forceful, sturdy, fat man, who sprung from an innkeeper of Tirnovo; whence Ferdinand's favourite name for him—the Tapster. He had been trained to the Bar, and was the foremost advocate of his day in Sofia.

He was almost the foremost conspirator as well, and played a prominent part in the series of rebellions against the Turkish rule which eventually resulted in the creation by Russia of the Principality of Bulgaria, and in the election of Alexander of Battenberg to the throne. His imagination was caught by the dream of the Greater Bulgaria created by the Treaty of San

Stefano, and abrogated by the Berlin Conference before it had been actually called into being.

Stambuloff was a typical Bulgarian, coarse, vulgar, violent, and crafty. But he was a patriotic Bulgarian as well; and in his alert mind the danger arising from a benevolent Russia was more acute than that arising from a hostile Turkey. He it was who called Ferdinand to the throne to hold at bay the Russian influence; and to his Bulgarian mind the disfavour in which Ferdinand's acceptance of the throne had landed him was one of his chief qualifications.

The first meeting of the pair took place upon a little steamer on which Ferdinand was stealing into his new principality by way of the river Danube. They discovered differences at their very first encounter, but the differences were then more important to the Prince than to the statesman. Ferdinand was loth to take Stambuloff into his counsels, and endeavoured to place Stoiloff, who was a member of the deputation which had selected him for Bulgaria, in the position of Prime Minister. But all attempts to form a Ministry were unavailing, and Ferdinand was forced to send for Stambuloff, and for the next six years the Tapster reigned supreme in Bulgaria.

The relations between the two, strained on their first meeting, went steadily from bad to

worse as time wore on. Stambuloff was far from impressed by the statecraft which his Prince had imbibed at his mother's knee, and treated him from the first as a silly schoolboy. Ferdinand's love of ceremony and state was marked out by him for the most contemptuous treatment; he loved to make the state with which the Prince surrounded himself appear ridiculous and mean.

Ferdinand's concern about recognition by the Powers was a mere nothing to Stambuloff; it provided a means for playing Russian intrigue off against Turkish hostility, and therefore Stambuloff welcomed it. In a word, he was for Bulgaria, while Ferdinand was only concerned with the interests and the prestige of the Prince of the Bulgarians.

While Ferdinand was settling down in Sofia, and learning the language and corrupting the politicians through his band of spies, he endured the arrogance and authority of Stambuloff patiently enough. But after four years of this he began to strive for some way of ridding himself of his too-powerful Minister. Then began a series of attempts upon the life of Stambuloff, which he evaded by coincidences that were remarkable in their effectiveness.

For instance, in 1891, he was walking home from his club with his friend and colleague,

M. Beltcheff, and passed three men at a well-lit corner. Shortly afterwards he changed to the other side of his friend, and they had not walked a score of yards in this order when Beltcheff fell pierced by the bullets of assassins. As Stambuloff ran for the nearest guardhouse, a cry of "Stambuloff is dead" fell on his ears, convincing him that the bullets were intended for him. The murderers remain unpunished to this day. In the next year, the Bulgarian agent, Dr. Vulkovich, was stabbed in the street, in circumstances which point to another mistake by the assassins of the Prince. Once more the murderers, who were well known, contrived to escape punishment.

But men who offended Ferdinand at this time had a way of falling into trouble with mysterious assassins. The case of Dr. Takeff is much in point. Takeff was a journalist who had commented in offensive terms, even for Sofia, upon the extravagance of the Court. Shortly afterwards he was riding near Sofia with the poet Aleko Constantinoff, and the pair changed seats. Again the assassins found the wrong man by reason of this accident, and poor Constantinoff suffered for the writings of his friend. But, as the official Press of Sofia remarked, his death was due to his keeping bad company, and his murderers were never punished.

The double attempt to kill Stambuloff aroused popular sympathy with the Minister, who had become detested because of the rigour with which he suppressed conspiracies, and because of the severity of the taxes in which the progressive policy he instituted involved Bulgaria, and to which are due the great improvements for which Ferdinand gets the credit. Experience had also warned Stambuloff, who instituted precautions which made attempts on his life difficult of execution. Ferdinand then began to scheme in order to force his resignation. In this he was abetted by the pro-Russian group of politicians in Sofia, but their schemes fell down before the imperturbability of the Prime Minister. But a severe blow was dealt at Stambuloff's influence when he revised the Constitution to permit the wedding with Princess Marie Louise to take place.

He encountered strong opposition, not only in the Sobranje, where the clerical party was very strong, but also with his own Ministerial colleagues. It was the sternest struggle of his career; and after winning the fight he declared to one of his friends that he felt like Jacob felt after wrestling with God. Thereafter a powerful political group plotted with the Prince to force the resignation of Stambuloff.

The head of the most outrageous of the plots

was Major Petroff, against whom the Premier obtained incriminating evidence of the most sensational description. He also obtained proof that his Prince was implicated deeply in this plot. The scheme was for the Major, with a band of firebrands, to rush into the Council Chamber where the Premier and the Prince were conferring, and to offer Stambuloff the choice between instant resignation or instant death. The discovery of this plot caused Stambuloff to write to Ferdinand in the following terms:

"Your Highness has not learnt in seven years to know me if you think I can be forced into signing anything. You might cut off my hands and feet, but you could never compel me to do what I now do voluntarily and of my own free will. Here is my resignation . . . and I warn you, Sire, that if you treat our new Minister as you have treated me, your throne is not worth a louis."

But Ferdinand refused to accept the resignation proffered in these terms, and waited until a domestic quarrel in which Major Savoff (afterwards Bulgaria's most celebrated General) was involved, and caused Stambuloff to publish a private letter, a line of conduct which the Prince characterized as "base." This adjective again drew a resignation from Stambuloff.

Mr. Herbert Vivian, who was in Sofia at the time, vividly describes the closing scenes between Premier and Prince. The latter's fête day was the occasion of a party at the palace: "Stambuloff sat in an outer room, glittering with decorations like a Christmas tree and smoking a big, bad cigar. After some sulky small-talk he slouched away out of the palace—a gross breach of etiquette. Some courtier mentioned this to the Prince; he shrugged his shoulders and said: 'I did not know he had been asked.'"

Two days later, on May 30, 1894, Stambuloff was summoned to the presence of Ferdinand, who coldly accepted his resignation. An attempt to patch up the quarrel ended in a riot outside the palace gates, in which the rival factions cried "Down with Stambuloff," and "Down with Ferdinand." The fallen Minister walked through the crowd, and was struck and spat upon as he passed to his home. Arrests were made, but they were entirely supporters of Stambuloff, many of whom were not concerned in the disgraceful scene.

From that day forward Stambuloff was kept a prisoner in his own house. His property was sequestrated, and only by the kind offices of friends was he able to save his furniture from an execution for debt. The assassins of his friends were allowed to walk the streets of Sofia

unmolested, but the ex-Premier was refused permission to leave the city.

Time and time again Stambuloff said openly that Ferdinand meant to have him murdered, and nobody was so rash as to dispute the truth of the prophecy. The police agents who were posted at his house, nominally to protect him, were in reality his gaolers. In bitter enmity to Ferdinand Stambuloff gave an interview to the *Frankfort Zeitung*, which resulted in his prosecution for criminal libel against Ferdinand. The trial dragged on, and efforts were once more made to get Stambuloff out of Bulgaria. Medical evidence was forthcoming that his health demanded the change, and all Bulgarians wished him to go. But Ferdinand would not permit it.

In July, 1895, the *Mir*, an official newspaper, published an article stating that it would be a patriotic deed to tear Stambuloff's flesh from his bones. Within two days the ex-Premier was driving home from his club with his friend Petkoff, when he was attacked by three ruffians with knives. Petkoff fell to the ground and could render no assistance; and the wretches had Stambuloff at their mercy. With their knives they hacked his prostrate body until it lost almost all human semblance.

That night Ferdinand was at the theatre at Carlsbad, laughing with an unusual gaiety.

He found time to send a hypocritical message of sympathy to the widow of the dead statesman, and directed that floral offerings should be sent to the funeral; message and flowers were alike refused. A few days later the *Svoboda* (*Liberty*) openly accused Ferdinand of direct and full responsibility for the murder of Stambuloff, an accusation which is supported by such a mass of evidence as would hang any man, prince or commoner, in a community such as our own. But it must be remembered that Ferdinand loves flowers, is kind to animals, and wept when he saw the first Bulgarian wounded in the Balkan War.

THE DEAD HAND

" *Wherever you are, in your goings out and your comings in, the blood of Stambuloff will be with you ; in your home, among your family, in church and in office, the shadow of Stambuloff will follow you, and will leave you in the world never more.*"—" SVOBODA."

CHAPTER IX

THE DEAD HAND

IN a little house in Sofia lives the widow of Stambuloff, once the most brilliant and beautiful woman in Sofia, now a withered crone who continues to live on for a cherished purpose. Her most treasured possession is the withered hand of a dead man; the hand of Stambuloff, the Bismarck of the Balkans. The woman and the dead hand wait Christian burial until the day when vengeance shall have been exacted from his murderer, Ferdinand, Czar of Bulgaria.

The evidence that fixes the moral guilt for the murder upon Ferdinand is unassailable. It was not adduced after the crime, but months before it took place. In an interview published at the beginning of 1895, the victim told the *Cologne Gazette* from his own mouth the manner and the very place of his death. For months beforehand the *Svoboda*, the Sofiote organ of the

Stambulovists, had warned the Government what would take place, and declared that when it happened the moral guilt would lie upon the Prince and his Ministers.

On the day after the murder, the paper accused the Prince of the moral guilt of the crime in unmistakable words that still ring through Europe when the death of Stambuloff is recalled.

"Who are the murderers of Stambuloff?" the *Svoboda* asked. "Who took the life of such a man as Bulgaria will never see again? Who lifted the yataghan against him?

"They are officially unknown, but all Bulgaria knows them. For the last seven months we have repeatedly and openly declared that the Government was keeping the assassins of Beltcheff and Vulkovitch to murder Stambuloff. The Minister of Foreign Affairs, M. Natchevitch, has given some of these men posts under Government, and daily receives them in his house.

"Whoever struck the blow, the moral murderers are the Prince and his Government, who refused to allow Stambuloff to leave Sofia, and so gave an opportunity to their assassins.

"The blood of Bulgaria's finest patriot cries aloud for vengeance. Two days ago the official journal, the *Mir*, called upon its friends to tear

the flesh from the bones of M. Stambuloff. Its orders have been executed."

Stambuloff was murdered in July, 1895. At the beginning of that year the following remarkable interview with him was published by the *Cologne Gazette*:

"I cannot help thinking that something serious is in the air. Everything takes time. I hear from my friends that things have reached a head. If I must fall, my friends will not desert my wife and my children. I do not grudge my enemies that triumph.

"In influential circles care will be taken that telegrams are sent from all Bulgaria denouncing the murderers, but expressing in the liveliest terms the satisfaction of 'the people' at being freed for ever from 'the tyrant' and 'the adulterer.'

"When the attempt on my life—to which Beltcheff fell a victim—was being planned, all Sofia knew of it. The Chief of Police and his people remained in blissful ignorance. To-day, too, numbers of people are aware of the impending attempt on my life, and my friends—and friends I have, thank God, everywhere—are more shrewd than the police.

"I cannot give you names, but my information is to be trusted. The former Chief of Police, Ilija Lukanoff, a man of honour and great ability,

who is very sincerely devoted to me, and who has even to-day very extensive connexions with home circles, came to me yesterday. He was quite excited, this grave, reserved man.

"He wished to go to the Prince, and acquaint him with everything. 'Ilija,' I said to him, 'it would be the stupidest thing that you could do. Don't you see that the murderers have the strongest support?'

"We know for an absolute fact that in Netschuinar, a suburb of Sofia, there is a band which is being drilled in the use of arms. We know that these people—Beltcheff's murderers are among them—have taken an oath to murder me.

"The gang of which I have been speaking consists of Rosareff, Hala, Arnaut, Tufektschieff, and some others. Tufektschieff has been sentenced at Constantinople to fifteen years' hard labour for the murder of Vulkovitch. Nevertheless he goes about here in safety.

"Velikoff and the other culprits are now at the head of affairs. Stoiloff is nowhere obeyed. Why therefore should not the 'tyrant,' the 'vampire,' the 'adulterer' be assassinated?"

After the appearance of that interview the British agent at Sofia made a determined attempt to obtain from Ferdinand permission for Stambuloff to leave Sofia. He was not successful.

All surrounding Ferdinand knew that he laid his plans to be out of Sofia when the blow should fall, and that he would send his sympathy, rejected by the widow, from Carlsbad.

"If that fox should send a wreath, do not let it enter the house," moaned Stambuloff on his bed of agony. They were his dying words. His right hand, slashed off by his vile butchers, remains, as I have said, unburied to this day. For twenty years the Lesser Czar has walked under the shadow of that dead hand; has walked so warily that the horrid death for which his enemies destine him has not yet overtaken him.

For Ferdinand had taken his precautions long ere he had his enemy done to death by hired braves. He knew he was going to a land where the knife played an important part in affairs of State. "In our future dominions," wrote the Count de Grenoud, who accompanied him on this journey in disguise to Bulgaria to assume the purple, "people are assassinating each other. I wonder if we shall reach Bulgaria safe and sound?"

It was a consideration which affected Ferdinand powerfully while on the journey; so powerfully that he shook with fright at his first greeting by his future subjects. But he had already taken elaborate precautions against a

death with the idea of which he was already familiar.

His interest in chain armour, displayed whenever any fine specimen was brought under his notice, was not merely the enthusiasm of the antiquarian. For years he wore a suit of it under his clothing; for all I know, he wears it still. His craft has not so far failed him that he has become careless of his life.

The apartment at the palace at Sofia which he calls *mon fumoir* (my den) has walls of steel and a door that can be hermetically fastened by a spring operated from the writing desk. A series of secret signals, known only to the trusted men who surround him, ensures that this door shall only be opened to the men who are safe; or, rather, to the men with whom Ferdinand is safe.

The shadow of the dead pursues him to Euxinograd, where the most elaborate precautions are taken throughout the neighbourhood whenever a royal visit is in progress. He is a haunted man even in his hunting quarters at the monastery of Rilo, where the whole district is policed by the monks in anticipation of the arrival of the kingly sportsman.

His travels abroad are marvels of precaution. Ask the Scotland Yard men, whose duty it is to look after foreign potentates in this country,

who is the fussiest and most timid man they ever encountered, and an unanimous vote will be cast for the Czar of Shoddy. In Paris he and his suite are even more solicitous; their precautions, as I have once before related, spoiled the pleasure of a Grand Prix crowd at Longchamps, when the Czar of Bulgaria condescended to visit that former scene of gaiety and gambling.

In Austria he is little better, and in Germany he is more fidgetty than ever. But it is when he has visited Russia that his precautions become portentous to the very degree of the ludicrous. He fancies, this scion of the Bourbons, that the conspirators will call in the aid of science and slay him with microbes. The very word disease makes him blench and fly for safety.

Thus on the journey from Sofia to Petrograd, in 1909, he was informed that the Grand Duke Nicholas had been deputed to meet and welcome him, but would be compelled to see less of him than he would like, because his nephew was down with scarlet fever, and although uncle and nephew were not residing together, the Grand Duke visited him regularly.

Ferdinand meditated anxiously over this ominous message, and then requested as a great favour that some other Grand Duke, further removed from the infectious ills to which even royalties are subject, should meet him; whereupon the

Grand Duke Constantine was appointed. Then the Czar of Bulgaria was tranquillized, and everything went smoothly for a time.

But after a day or two spent in the Russian capital Ferdinand was shocked to learn that, whereas the nephew of the Grand Duke Nicholas was suffering from scarlet fever in another house, the Grand Duke Constantine's own children, who lived with him under the same roof, were suffering from genuine diphtheria, which everybody knows is far more malignant.

In the course of the next day Ferdinand was suffering from an imaginary pain in the throat, and made such a fuss about it that the whole Russian Court was convulsed with merriment. He sought the first excuse for returning to Sofia, and only breathed freely when safe again under the care of his trusted Court physician.

Ferdinand ought to be inured to threats of assassination, for not a week passes but he gets threatening letters by the post. But the receipt of a bottle labelled "typhus bacilli" never fails to make him livid with fear. The sight of men cleaning off from the palace walls drawings of himself suffering hideous deaths—Ferdinand is easy to draw, and it is a favourite students' amusement—always sets him chattering with rage.

But there are traits in his character which

overrule this fear of assassination, strong as it is within him, and cause him to hang on to his threatened throne, though he does so in fear and trembling. What those characteristics are will presently be made plain; meanwhile, it will be well to consider what country it is that he rules, where the leading statesman can predict successfully the manner and place of his own assassination without causing any surprise.

WHO ARE THE BULGARIANS?

" *Bulgaria is a country where atrocities are perpetrated.*'
-" THE TIMES."

CHAPTER X

WHO ARE THE BULGARIANS?

LESS than a hundred years ago a small Russian army, campaigning against the Turks between the Balkans and the Danube, discovered a race of people who spoke a language almost identical with their own, and who possessed Slavonic features and customs. This discovery was made in a region which for centuries was believed to be given over to Greeks and Turks. It came as a shock to the Russians to find that the supposed extinct race of the Bulgars had survived through the five hundred years that separated them from any historical mention.

Then was revived the story of ancient Bulgaria and its ambitious Czars, who threatened the Greeks at the very gates of Byzantium a century before the Turk came to Europe. The newly-discovered race was descended from the very desperadoes of the old one; from the brigands

who had fled to the sternest hills and there preserved their racial characteristics from the onslaught of the proselytizing Ottoman.

Five hundred years had left them just five hundred years behind in civilization. They were the same barbarians who had gouged out their enemies' eyes and hamstrung their own wives for barrenness when the Turks broke through the walls of Constantinople. They were rude, primitive peasants, a dour, disagreeable race that inhabited the gloomiest portion of Europe, and had never learned how to smile.

When Bulgaria was one of the great Powers of central Europe the inhabitants had the custom, when a child was born, of gathering around the cradle and moaning in unison. It was their way of expressing sympathy with the new arrival for the hard luck of being born into Bulgaria.

The story of their wars with the Byzantine Greeks is one long record of nameless horrors. One of the best-remembered incidents is that of the punishment inflicted upon a captured host of Bulgars by the Byzantine Emperor, Basil II. He put out both eyes of all except every hundredth man, and to him he left one eye, so that he might lead his blind fellows back to their defeated Czar.

Time after time the Bulgar Czars organized the Balkan Slavs into a composite band, with

the object of wresting Byzantium from the Greeks and founding a new Slavonic Empire of the Orient. Time after time they were checked in their forward sweep at those very lines of Chatalja where Ferdinand and his modern Bulgarians were brought to a standstill by the stubborn Turk in 1913.

Then came the Turk, and swept aside both Greek and Bulgar. In the fastnesses of the stern mountains the scum of the Bulgarian population hid and multiplied, in time to return to the tilling of the land. All that had been fine in the old race had disappeared. It had either been absorbed by the Turk and his demand for janissaries and harem women, or it had found its way to self-extinction in the monasteries with which the gloomy land was well furnished.

There remained only a race of peasants, without a history or traditions; a race over which five hundred years passed without altering or softening one feature or one barbarous custom. It was a race without a nobility or even a landed gentry; a race without a literature except a string of homicidal folk-songs which embody the spirit in which the Emperor Basil treated the conquered and captive Bulgars.

The Russians found them and recognized them as fellow-Slavs—Slavs with much the same original habits and characteristics, but

with none of the refining influences common even to the Russians of the reign of Ivan the Terrible. It was natural that Russia, with her hatred of Turkey, should sympathize with this race, near of kin, but suffering sorely from arrested development. Thenceforward Bulgaria had an abettor in her struggle against the domination of the Turk.

The methods by which the Bulgarians resisted Turkish tyranny and rapacity were no better and no worse than their way of striving for a new Empire of the Orient five hundred years before. Their conspiracies, their incursions into non-Bulgarian territory, their skirmishes with the infidel at their gates, were simply a revival of the old eye-gouging methods of their mighty Czars of the Middle Age.

But they had the knack of getting sympathy. In England, which followed Russia in her discovery of this race, reputedly extinct, there was no credit given to the thought that a Bulgarian could do anything wrong. When the London newspapers wrote of Bulgarian atrocities, they meant atrocities committed by Turks in Bulgaria. The Bulgarian reprisals were known only to the rare travellers who had penetrated into the heart of the Balkans, and who, after making close acquaintance with the habits of the natives, failed to discriminate between a throat-cutting

executed by a Christian Slav and a similar bit of work by a heathen Turk.

Very slowly indeed has recognition been forced of the fact that while the perpetrators of Bulgarian atrocities were hireling Turks of the lowest class, and not to be compared with the brave soldiers who compose the bulk of the Turkish Army, the Bulgarian comitadjis, with their cowardly cruelties, were fairly representative of the average Bulgarian soldier when at war.

What more evidence is required than the telegram sent by King Constantine from the field of battle to his Prime Minister, instructing him to protest against the atrocities of the Bulgarian soldiery. It is dated July, 1913, and reads:—"Protest in my name to the representatives of the civilized Powers against these monsters in human form, and declare before the whole civilized world that I shall be compelled to take vengeance in order to inspire terror into these monsters, and to make them reflect before they commit any more such crimes."

Thus Tino the Undecided on his quondam Allies, who from time immemorial were held by the Greeks to be barbarians pure and simple. The taxes of Stambuloff and the sophistication of Ferdinand may have sufficed to convert Sofia from a city of sewers and filthy mosques to a modern capital with electric light and tram-

ways, gardens, museums and broad boulevards, but a quarter of a century has not changed the heart or the outlook of a single Bulgarian peasant.

The whole of Bulgarian literature, until the last twenty years, was comprised in those folk-songs which have perpetuated the Bulgarian spirit and nationality. Chief among them are the lays of the heroes, and upon these heroes the character of the Bulgarian peasant of to-day is modelled. One of these heroes, having been bantered by his drinking companions on account of an unnoticed blemish on the fairness of his lady, goes home and kills her for the fault. Another drags his mother round the house by the hair of the head because he came home unexpectedly and found no meal prepared for him. A third, who had killed his paramour because she was losing her beauty, was gently chidden by his mother, who represented that the victim would have done good work in the scullery.

In short these heroes, whose exploits are sung in every village of Bulgaria to-day, are as unmitigated a lot of cruel scoundrels as ever constituted a comitadji band. Foremost among them is the national hero Marko, whose extensive drinking bouts are the only stories that can make a Bulgarian smile. Among his nobler exploits are the abduction of a Turkish princess, who bores him so unutterably that he has her killed

by his band. She had contrived his escape from captivity, and upon this charming legend is built up the Bulgarian tradition of gratitude.

Such legends are "the gems of our literature," says Slaveikoff, the Bulgarian poet. The fact that for five hundred years they have been the only Bulgarian literature accounts for the circumstance that Ferdinand was called to rule over a race whose ethics were those of the fourteenth century, and fairly barbarous ones at that.

The land inhabited by this survival of mediæval barbarity is the ancient Scythia, the Siberia of the Roman Empire. From time immemorial it has been the cockpit of Eastern Europe, a land given over to slaughter and an infinite succession of dark deeds. It has taken on the aspect of its history, and the traveller through its gloomy plains and forbidding mountains can well sympathize with the culprits of ancient Rome, who were banished from smiling Italy to this frowning solitude.

The liberation by Russia of the Bulgarians from the Turkish yoke and from Ottoman exactions gave a stimulus to the primary producing industries. Land which had never been scratched since the earliest times was put to the plough, and proved fertile as the cornland on the borders of the Black Sea is fertile. The Bulgarians have improved their long-deferred opportunity, and

prosperity has followed the act of liberation. It is a primitive prosperity, and a prosperity upon which the ambition of Bulgarian rulers has cast a heavy tax.

At the present time the Bulgarian is emerging from the peasant stage. The leading men of the country are the educated sons of peasants, with the habits of peasants. The traditional simplicity of their class is a convenience to such men, and they have made a fetish of it. Among them has rapidly grown up a military caste, and a bureaucratic caste as well. Both have thriven in the hot-house atmosphere created by Ferdinand, with his ostentatious Court and his extensive secret service.

But the soul of Bulgaria is a peasant soul, brutalized by 500 years of repression and stagnation. The Bulgarians are a race apart, even among the Balkan peoples. They have a significant phrase when they talk of a journey beyond their own confines; they say they are going "into Europe."

FERDINAND AND HIS CREATURES

" *When I went to Bulgaria, I decided that if there were to be assassinations, I should be on the side of the assassins.*"—FERDINAND OF BULGARIA.

CHAPTER XI

FERDINAND AND HIS CREATURES

JUST as the Bulgarians say they are going into Europe when they leave Bulgaria, Ferdinand decided that he was quitting Europe and civilization when he entered his new kingdom. He went with his mind fixed on thoughts of assassination; and turning to account the course of Machiavelli on which he had been reared, he decided that the assassins could be made the servant of the Prince. He has himself confessed that his initial resolve was to have the assassins on his side.

Between the resignation of Prince Alexander and the election of Prince Ferdinand, Stambuloff had ruled as dictator, and with the arrival of Ferdinand the situation was only nominally altered. Ferdinand was Prince, but Stambuloff ruled the country. To remedying this state of affairs Ferdinand exercised all his craft, and his mother, the Princess Clementine, all her wealth.

The secret police of the country, like all its other services, were controlled by Stambuloff, and it became necessary for Ferdinand to organize a secret service of his own, paid out of his own pocket. The purpose to which this service was applied was not to detect crime and conspiracy, but to gain for Ferdinand information to the detriment of the principal men around him.

While he was so employed the energies of Stambuloff were concentrated in crushing a widespread conspiracy against Ferdinand, which had been conceived even before he arrived in Sofia. The ringleader in this was Major Panitza, an old friend and fellow-conspirator with Stambuloff in the days when Bulgaria was not yet a country with a separate existence. Panitza was a bluff, jolly fellow, afflicted with the complaint known to our American cousins as "slack jaw." Consequently he was able to boast about the cafés of Sofia that the new Prince would soon be overthrown or killed, without much attention being paid to his talk.

But Stambuloff was alert, and found that Panitza had really organized a plot which was backed by quite half the officers in the Bulgarian Army, and that risings were arranged in several important centres at the same time. The method to be employed with Ferdinand was to seize him, and offer him the choice between instant resigna-

tion or sudden death. Nobody doubted which choice the new Prince would make.

Stambuloff had Panitza arrested by two of the other ringleaders of the plot, who had to perform this task in the presence of a band of men loyal to Stambuloff. A list of officers implicated was obtained, and precautions were taken that completely foiled the conspiracy.

That night a dramatic scene was enacted at a ball given at the Palace, possibly one of the most surprising entertainments ever offered, even by a Balkan ruler. Two hundred officers were bidden, and of these seventy were implicated in the plot. The Prince knew of their guilt, and they knew that he knew.

He stood to receive them in his glittering uniform. On one side of him stood his mother, a picture of aristocratic, frigid scorn. On the other stood Stambuloff, his face set in a cynical, mocking smile. As each of the culprits advanced, the furious Prince rolled his eyes to his mother, who gazed at the trembling man with cold, inscrutable rage, while the "Tapster" made no attempt to hide his derisive triumph.

It was a trying evening for the plotters. Whenever two or three gathered together to discuss the situation, they became aware of the presence of mysterious guests at the ball. They were shadowed and harassed, and knew not what

might be the end of that evening. To their great relief they were allowed to depart unhindered.

Panitza was tried and sentenced to death. None thought the sentence would be carried out, Panitza least of all. He relied on his ancient comradeship with Stambuloff; and besides, it was recognized on all sides that he was a mere figurehead in the conspiracy. But Ferdinand insisted, and after his usual fashion rushed off to Carlsbad before the sentence was carried out. "He had Panitza shot in order to leave for Carlsbad the same day," said Stambuloff to the *Cologne Gazette*.

Of course, the whole of the odium of this execution attached itself to Stambuloff. This enabled Ferdinand to gather round him many of the men who were spared, and who hated Stambuloff, both for the death of Panitza, and for the derision with which he treated them as unsuccessful plotters. With true Machiavellian craft, Ferdinand represented to these men that the whole blame for the severe repressive measures taken lay with Stambuloff.

Among the dishonest plotting toadies he attached to his person was the man Natchevitch, who goes down in Bulgarian history under the well-earned designation of Beelzebub. A bankrupt merchant, he attached himself to Ferdinand by reason of his lack of scruple and

his capacity for eating dirt. He was soon installed at the Court as one of the chief among the useful toadies the Prince maintained around him.

Among his intimates were three brothers named Tufektschieff, all of whom were implicated in that attempt to murder Stambuloff, which ended in the death of his friend Beltcheff. One of them was arrested, but the other two escaped. The arrested man was handled by Stambuloff's agents in such a manner that he died in prison—in plain English he died under torture rather than betray his associates. I have said, I think, that the customs of Bulgaria were those of the Middle Ages.

Another brother was concerned in the murder of Dr. Vulkovitch at Constantinople, where he was sentenced to fifteen years' hard labour for the crime. He fled back to Sofia and remained in hiding till the fall of Stambuloff, when he moved openly about the city under the protection of Natchevitch, who had now become Minister of Foreign Affairs. In equal security lived a number of other men, whose complicity in both these murders was a matter of notoriety.

Stambuloff, after his quarrel with Ferdinand and his imprisonment in his own house, gave an interview to the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, in which the character of Ferdinand was delineated with

scathing accuracy. When Ferdinand read it the story of Henry II and Thomas à Becket rose to his mind. The ready tool Natchevitch was present, and throwing down the paper he cried, "Will no one rid me of this gutter-snipe?"

Henry, when his sinister order was carried out, confessed his sin in the sight of the English people by a penance more remarkable than any made by a monarch in the pages of history. His barefoot pilgrimage to the tomb of the murdered Archbishop was probably made in genuine sorrow for a petulant wish, repented before its suggestion had been carried into effect. It is like Ferdinand to repeat the crime and to omit the atonement.

The creatures he employed to perpetrate his crimes remain unpunished to this day. They were permitted to organize bands to desecrate the grave of Stambuloff, while yet it was lying open to receive the mangled body of the statesman. And Ferdinand, from the safety of Carlsbad, dared to send expressions of sympathy and a wreath to the bereaved woman, who had lived for months in the shadow of the impending crime.

His creatures lived to murder Stambuloff's friend Petkoff. They lived to wax fat in idleness in the cafés of Sofia; some of them are alive at this day. Their deeds are known and they make no concealment of them. For Ferdinand is on

their side. Well has he kept his wise vow to be on the side of the assassins.

Not that he would stoop to assassination himself. He is always absent in Carlsbad when any of this vile work is in train. He himself has a sensitive disposition that revolts at all deeds of violence and bloodshed. As we shall see, he cannot even bear to see a dumb animal suffer.

FERDINAND THE FEMININE

"*If ever I feel tired or depressed, I have only to look at a bunch of violets to become myself again.*"—FERDINAND OF BULGARIA.

CHAPTER XII

FERDINAND THE FEMININE

M. JOSEPH REINACH, the French publicist, whose articles signed Polybe in the *Paris Figaro* have been rightly estimated as among the most informative contributions to the public knowledge of European politics, long maintained a private correspondence with Ferdinand. The letters of the ruler of Bulgaria, written in his own handwriting and signed "The Good European," are masterpieces of hypocrisy and elaborate double dealing.

Their tortuous insincerity does not suffice to conceal one outstanding fact, revealed by the character of the handwriting itself. The thin, delicate sloping letters, the rich perfumed note-paper, the exquisite neatness of the correspondence expose the feminine soul of the man who has commanded so many murders.

An admirer has credited him with "an almost exaggerated delicacy of mind," and the evidence brought in support of the statement at least proves that his amusements, his recreations, his antipathies, and many of his occupations are those of a well-brought-up woman of the princely class.

Old Major Popoff, when he met him for the second time, was received by the Prince reclining on a gorgeous couch. In his hand was a perfect Malmaison carnation which he sniffed approvingly; he even condescended to point out to the rough old Bulgarian the exquisite formation of the petals. The visitor was able to grasp two points in the appearance of his new monarch. His hair had been elaborately curled and prinked. And the ruler of Bulgaria wore corsets.

But Ferdinand was too much devoted to the good things of life to retain the corsets permanently, and they were laid aside as his girth rapidly increased. As his ambrosial locks receded from his forehead, he transferred his affections to his beard, which began existence as a neat little "imperial" in the early days of his reign. It has now become a torpedo creation to which a highly-paid expert devotes the whole of his time, spending hours in the consideration of its proper training and nurture.

This beard goes well with his favourite cos-



Ferdinand in his uniform as Admiral of the Fleet.



Ferdinand in the national costume of Bulgaria.

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tumes. One of them is the Bulgarian national costume, which he has elaborated into a creation of fine linen and silks, with many a feminine touch in bright colours and delicate trimmings. The other is that of an admiral of the Bulgarian Navy, in which he was wont to receive British visitors of distinction, as being peculiarly suitable to the honour of a great Naval Power. Needless to say that Ferdinand becomes atrociously seasick if ever he trusts himself out of sight of land.

But Ferdinand's talent for designing costumes is so remarkable that he excited the envy and admiration of the most celebrated of Parisian man milliners, who was privileged to witness him at work with his silks and velvets. This artist has ever since cherished a malignant wish that the long-expected reverse might overtake the Bulgarian Czar, and that cruel fate might at the same time deprive him of his extensive inheritance. In that case, real scope might be found for his remarkable talents, and the women of the world would be the happier because of a Bulgarian revolution.

I have already told of the disgust of Stambuloff at the Prince's coronation creation of purple velvet and ermine. That is only one of the many triumphs Ferdinand has achieved with rich stuffs and anxious thought. He now has a special

costume of his own design, suitable to every feast and holy day.

Thus for the Easter feast he prepared a long mantle of crimson velvet of the order of St. Alexander, to mark the fact that he was a younger son. On St. George's Day, April 23, he sports a robe of blue velvet slashed with silver; for in Bulgaria this day is the fête day of the military order of bravery, in which Ferdinand takes high rank.

These creations are the result of many anxious days spent in his assassin-proof den, surrounded by his tame birds and the modest wild flowers from which he draws inspiration. His boyish hobbies were for flowers and birds, and with the mature man these tastes have become a veritable passion. His aviaries are reputed the finest in the world, and he can still occupy himself with the woes of a pet canary when all Europe is bathed in blood, and his rough adopted people are dying by tens of thousands.

The flower gardens he has installed at his Palaces of Varna and Euxinograd are veritable wonders. Trees and plants from every clime have been acclimatized under the warm sun and in the virgin soil of rude Bulgaria. In his Japanese garden he has reproduced the ponds and terraces of the Orient, and by a miracle of care has bred the butterflies of far Japan in the same

environment, so that they hover among the Japanese blooms and complete the resemblance.

This is only one among the thousand wonders he has contrived with birds, beasts and insects. He is at his best when showing these beauties with unaffected enthusiasm. It is then he tells his visitors how, when his compeers were deep in the drill-book and the practice of arms, he devoted his hours to the study of natural history and botany, and the cultivation of a sensitive soul.

Ruder monarchs have played coarse jests upon that sensitive spirit, and have merited a well-earned and long-treasured resentment. For instance, at a time of great anxiety to Ferdinand, when the world looked very black, and a kind word meant so much, he was greatly cheered by the announcement that his sovereign lord, the Sultan of Turkey, was sending him a royal present as a mark of goodwill.

Ferdinand waited anxiously for the present, but it came not. Instead there came the announcement that the Red Sultan was ransacking his Empire for a steed worthy of such a Prince. Ferdinand winced, for his horses had to be chosen with some care. His personal preference was for the little native ponies of Bulgaria; when he was mounted on one of these he had not so far

to fall. Still, a present was a present, and he waited with eager expectation.

At the end of five weary months, the envoy from Yildiz was announced. With every show of pomp he had the present conducted to the royal mews, where it was received by Ferdinand in person with all the ceremony which he knew how to initiate. The wrappings were removed from the present, and there stood the most wretched old screw that ever disgraced a Constantinople cab. Casting one glance of fury at the brute, Ferdinand fled, and next day the Sultan's present was sent to the Zoo.

Even a more hideous outrage upon Ferdinand's delicacy of mind was perpetrated by the Kaiser, who has none of that commodity to spare, and is given to practical jokes of the kind that Captain Marryat describes as being usual in the Navy a century ago. Ferdinand and the Kaiser were both guests at Brunswick Castle, when the incident occurred.

The time was spring, and it was a delicious moonlight evening. In the grounds of the castle the nightingales were singing voluptuously, and Ferdinand was wearing for the first time a pair of white silk smalls which became him to perfection. He leaned out of the castle window, surveyed the moonlit beauty, and listened to the raptures of the bird of spring. All the young

girl in him rose to the surface, and he abandoned himself to the moment and its romance.

And while his shoulders were heaving with true Coburg emotion and love of nature, there crept behind him the Kaiser. The broad back and the roll of fat on the neck were irresistible. Down came the mailed fist with a resounding thwack, and with something hardly distinguishable from a scream Ferdinand faced his tormentor.

Furious and scarlet with passion he grasped the identity of his assailant. He summoned to the occasion all the dignity of the Bourbons. "I pray Your Majesty to refrain from practical jokes," he said, and withdrew, refusing to be conciliated. The pair next met in London at the funeral of King Edward, but the Bulgarian monarch refused either to forgive or forget. The very sight of William caused him to growl like a sullen bear, though the Kaiser persistently ignored his resentment.

The twain are now "glorious allies," but the Kaiser may live to learn that a Bourbon "forgets nothing."

Of course Ferdinand is as kind to animals as the average village butcher. His British biographer remarks that "certain forms of so-called 'sport' still tolerated in this country would horrify him. He has a constitutional horror of anything savouring of cruelty."

For instance, a Turkish fisherman not far from his Euxinograd Palace captured a Black Sea seal, and exhibited it at so much a head in the Port of Varna. Ferdinand heard the news with a disgust he did not attempt to conceal. For a day he brooded over the sufferings of the poor sea creature, and his birds and flowers did not suffice to soothe his ruffled sensitiveness to pain inflicted on a dumb creature. Finally he ordered his car and drove down to the port, where he purchased the captive for £24, and ordered it to be set free in the sea. Then he returned to Euxinograd and recovered his equanimity by smelling violets and gazing at cyclamens.

One can well imagine that such a king would shrink from the sight of bloodshed. It is recorded that, at the beginning of the first Balkan war, it was his sad duty to look upon the first Bulgarian wounded as they came into Stara Zagora. The sight reduced him to bitter tears, and on his bended knees he implored Heaven to spare him any further sight of battle. It is only fair to state that he has not since tempted Providence, but has held studiously aloof from all scenes of carnage, though unhappily at the head of an army in the field. And when the sights of war have come unpleasantly near him, with true maidenly sensibility he has invariably turned away his head.

FERDINAND AND THE BULGARIANS

"*I am the rock, against which the waves beat in vain; I am as the oak in the forest.*"—FERDINAND OF BULGARIA.

CHAPTER XIII

FERDINAND AND THE BULGARIANS

I HAVE laid some stress upon the primitive boorishness of the Bulgarians as a race, and upon the essential effeminacy of the Prince who, for lack of a better, was called to the throne of this new principality. The contrast is necessary in order that it may be shown by what means Ferdinand established dominion over a people which has always despised and loathed him, and how he has been able to falsify the confident estimate of the shrewdest observers in Europe, and retain for over a quarter of a century a position for which no one would at any time have given a year's purchase.

The key to Bulgarian character was maintained by the Bulgarians themselves to be simplicity. In Bulgaria there were no inherited titles, no formalities, no niceties of social intercourse. Like many a man who is incapable of

refinement and courtesy of manner, the Bulgarians, by exaggerating their defects, produced the impression of blunt honesty and straightforwardness. They prided themselves on their Spartan simplicity, and were for ever talking about it.

Their boastings about their lack of ceremoniousness gave Ferdinand the clue to the weak spot in the Bulgarian character. He knew that the truly simple and unaffected man is not even aware of the virtue of his simplicity; that there can be no such thing as a conscious sincerity in such matters. And Ferdinand, the most artificial product of the Courts of Europe, deliberately chose that his Bœotian subjects should be a foil to his own elegances.

He began, even in his bachelor days, by establishing a Court ruled by the stiffest formality. This ceremony was doubled when he married, just as his civil list was increased from £20,000 to £40,000 a year. In the little city of Sofia, which even now does not boast 100,000 inhabitants, he maintained a household and a state which rivalled that of the Kaiser himself, and far exceeded that of any other reigning House of Europe.

His exits and entries were preceded by a band of gorgeously uniformed attendants, who backed before him waving wands of glittering whiteness. Court etiquette of an exacting severity was

devised and scrupulously exacted. The Bulgarians derided this ceremony openly and on every occasion. But they conformed to it.

Really they were deeply impressed.

Ferdinand contrived a number of orders with brilliant decorations; they had had nothing of the kind in Bulgaria before his coming. Hardly a year passed but he added a new order to the list, and conferred on his toadies the glittering decoration it carried. The simple Bulgarians mocked at these orders, and made endless jokes about them. But there was keen competition for the decorations, and no respectable Sofiete can afford to be without one. Moreover, no decorated Bulgarian ever fails to wear the little button which marks him as decorated properly and jewelled in every hole.

A few of the titles of the courtiers surrounding Ferdinand may be specified, in order to show how elaborate is the state maintained among this simple peasant people. We have the Chancellor of Bulgarian Orders, the Chief of the Secret Cabinet, and two Secretaries, the Grand-Almoner of the Prince of Tirnovo, the Court Marshal, the Major-Domo, the Director of the Civil List, the Master of Ceremonies, the Court Physician, the Master of the Horse, the Inspector of Cavalry, the Attaché to the Queen, Mistress of the Robes, Court Poetess, Grand Mistress of

the Court, Commandant of the Palace, and such a host of attachés and aides-de-camp as was never dreamt of outside a German Court of the eighteenth century.

All this monstrous ceremony served a double purpose with Ferdinand. It impressed the Bulgarians, who could not themselves go the pace, but had the secret snobbish admiration for such things always found among people who profess to regard simplicity as the chief among virtues. It further gave him a reason for taking offence at breaches of Court etiquette, and allowed him to penalize people against whom he could furbish up no other complaint.

Thus Stambuloff was continually infringing the rules of the Court. The Prime Minister, who had enjoyed a large income as the first advocate in Bulgaria, drew from his grateful country the salary of £500 for controlling its destinies in the teeth of an ungrateful Prince and an inappreciative people. To him the formal Court and the sinful waste it involved was really a source of offence. His open disregard for the childish forms it was sought to impose upon him was soon made a source of offence by the King, and even by the meek little Princess Marie Louise.

The effect of this regal extravagance was felt not only in Sofia itself, but throughout Bulgaria. Ferdinand was pleased to travel widely in his

principality, and with some considerable elaboration of ceremony. The little municipalities he honoured with his visits had to prepare a ruinous hospitality in advance. A visit from the Prince beggared a community and left it bankrupt for years. Ferdinand ate up little villages like a locust, and earned the deep detestation of the impoverished peasants.

But he impressed them at the same time. And so he gained his object, he established a moral ascendency over the boors, who professed an exaggerated simplicity, and bowed down before ceremonies which made them look ridiculous, and extravagances which impoverished them.

The needs of the country, when Ferdinand accepted the throne, were many and essential. Roads and railways had to be built to develop the nascent agricultural industry which has been the mainstay of Bulgarian national life. The work was taken in hand by Stambuloff, whose plans for the progress of the country, even more than his foreign policy, reveal him as the statesman that his admirers have always proclaimed him. His policy of internal development entailed heavy taxation, under which the country groaned, and which earned him, more than anything else, the title of Tyrant, which Ferdinand thrust upon him.

With his fall the policy of internal development

was brought to a standstill, but the taxation continued. Ferdinand employed much of the money in the creation of a capital city worthy of such a Prince and such a Court. He set about the creation of a new Sofia, taking as his motto "Expense is no object." A modern city was run up with a celerity and elaboration that reminded visitors of the creation of Johannesburg.

M. Alexandre Hepp, the enthusiastic French biographer of Ferdinand, almost exhausts his enthusiasm in recounting the marvels of this recreation of an old city. "It seems like a new city imposed upon one already renewed," he writes. "Every time I visit it I find something added—a monument, a museum, a park, a government office, a bank, an hotel, a factory, a theatre, or a school. New boulevards and streets, wide, well-paved, planted with trees, lined with kiosques, cross and re-cross. Lions and eagles ornament the new bridges. Electricity flares, the tramcars roar, motor-cars dash about. Near the statue to the Czar Liberator, designed by Zocchi, rears the finished structure of the great cathedral Newski, built at a cost of £1,000,000 raised by public subscription. Great markets are rising from their foundations." And so on.

All this work was done under the personal supervision of Ferdinand himself. "Behind corner window of the palace," writes Mr. Joh

Macdonald, who has produced an English biography of Czar Ferdinand, which only falls short in enthusiasm of the ecstasies of M. Hepp, "overlooking the highway, is the Czar's private study, where he often works till the first hour or two of the morning. Piles of street plans, of monumental drawings, of designs for the splendid park and gardens, with their new palace, have been examined behind that corner window."

The sophistication of the Bulgarians having been begun by the creation of this fine city in the midst of the gloomy plains of Bulgaria, Ferdinand continued it by the creation of a powerful military caste.

The dominant note of Sofia is military; there are gay uniforms at every turn. "With their great grey cloaks in the Russian style," writes M. Hepp, "their white helmets and immaculate gloves, or buckled in their long frogged tunics, with their swords swinging by silken sabretaches, the officers present a fine appearance. They swarm at the new Army Club and at the restaurant of the Red Crab."

The new Sofia, too, has produced a citizen class which already disdains the peasant simplicity which was the hall-mark of the Bulgarian nation in the time of Stambuloff. They affect fine manners and wit, they try to smile where the old-time Bulgar was a gloomy churl. These

parvenu niceties are ostentatious, and sit but ill upon people to whom they are far from natural; they are accompanied by much chatter about art, for Sofia has already produced its clan of "intellectuals."

But Ferdinand has maintained his distance with the new Bulgarians as with the old. To be hooted at the theatre by a mob of students is no rare experience with him; it drives every vestige of colour from his flabby cheeks. But he will not stoop to conciliate, even in Sofia. His predecessor was a frank young man, who made himself adored by the Bulgarians by meeting them openly and making their life his own. He won love, but no semblance of respect.

Warned by the experience and the fate of Alexander, Ferdinand has always continued to treat every Bulgarian with the utmost reticence. For them there are no confidences; none of the graces of the Fat Charmer are expended upon winning the hearts of Bulgarians. He prefers to be detested, to be feared, to excite a puzzled antipathy.

And there is the secret of the long reign of a Prince over whom the shadow of assassination and the dread of deposition have floated ever since his first appearance in Sofia. The Bulgarians despise what they understand, they have a contempt for those who stoop to please them.

They keep a regard for Ferdinand because he treats them as an inferior race; in their heart of hearts they are proud to be ruled by this fine product of two races who, in the words of one of their own writers, "combines German steadiness with French dash."

A nobler race would have sent Ferdinand packing long ago; he knew the measure of their boorishness, and turned it to his own account with a craft that cannot be denied him. And so Ferdinand has escaped assassination and deposition for more than a quarter of a century.

What ambitions he has begotten, and what schemes he has launched in that period, we shall now see.

FERDINAND THE AMBITIOUS

"*I drink to Czar Ferdinand, the heir to Constantine.*"—
SOME FUDDLED YANKEE SCRIBE.

CHAPTER XIV

FERDINAND THE AMBITIOUS

IN the summer of 1892 there was a notable sight in the Bavarian city of Munich. The richest goldsmith of the city of breweries displayed in his window a crown, sceptre, orb and sword, which he had made to the order of the Prince of Bulgaria. The rich jewels with which the regalia were decked were the family gems of the Princess Clementine, who had presented them to her pet son, in anticipation of the recognition by the Powers which both fondly believed to be imminent.

But the anticipation was not realized, and Ferdinand had not even the money to pay the goldsmith for his work. A lawsuit was initiated against him, and at the same time the aggrieved tradesman displayed the jewels in his shop window, where they drew a daily crowd. To stop the scandal the Princess Clementine stepped in and footed the bill; and the jewels were stored

at her Ebenthal Palace until such time as they should be needed—not, as a matter of fact, until after her death.

The story illustrates the long-cherished ambition of the Bulgar Czar to reign supreme in his own realm; but that, after all, is perhaps a comprehensible ambition for the grandson of Louis Philippe and the descendant of Francis I. But the extent of the ambitions of the lesser Czar is not grasped by those who think that his ambitions are bounded by his wish to rule as the recognized sovereign of that Greater Bulgaria which was set up by Russia through the treaty of San Stefano. Ferdinand's dreams are wilder by far than those wide boundaries would justify.

In the grounds of his Euxinograd Palace at the port of Varna is a little hill, from the crest of which can be obtained a spacious view across the Black Sea. On the summit the Prince caused to be erected a throne, and to this spot he would daily repair when spending his leisure at Euxinograd. Seated on this throne he would sit for hours gazing over the calm waters toward Constantinople; looking inscrutably out toward the Byzantium which was for so long the centre of Eastern power and the capital of the Empire of the East.

Not long before the outbreak of the great war he employed a well-known Vienna specialist in heraldry and genealogy to trace his descent,

and to endeavour to link up his family with that of the ancient Bulgarian Czars. All things are possible to a Vienna specialist with a royal commission, and it is not surprising to learn that the antiquarian was entirely successful.

Ferdinand, it appears, traces his descent, in common with the Kaiser, to Philip of Hohenzollern, who married a descendant of the Byzantine Emperor Alexius Comnenus. Now Alexius had as wife Irene, who was daughter of Maria, the only daughter of the Bulgarian Czar Samuel. What better claim, then, than that of Ferdinand, not only to the Czardom of Bulgaria, but to imperial sway in the new Eastern realm of which the modern Byzantium must inevitably be the capital.

Indeed Constantinople has gained a hold of his fertile imagination that may account for the supreme and audacious treachery of his conduct during the past few years. He dreams, this Prince of a pot-house, of erecting his throne in the city which he last visited wearing the red fez of vassalage. The dream is no new one. When the great assembly had gathered at Tirnovo to witness the apostasy of the infant Boris, Ferdinand's uncle, the witty old Duc d'Aumale, ventured on some satirical congratulations. "I congratulate you, Ferdinand," he said, "your son is now orthodox, it will be your turn next."

But Ferdinand, wrapped in his megalomania, failed to detect the jocularity. "I have been thinking about this for some time," he answered earnestly; "I have fixed my baptism in a church, and in circumstances, which will certainly reconcile you to my act."

"And where, and under what circumstances will it happen?"

"It will take place at St. Sophia, under the thunder of Bulgarian guns."

This conversation, it must be remembered, took place soon after the fall of Stambuloff and the murder of that strong man, which removed from the path of Ferdinand the only obstacle in Bulgaria to the unchecked attainment of his wishes in that country. It is to be borne in mind as the predominating motive in all his acts from that time forward. It shaped his foreign policy, and affords the sole key to his method of dealing with the internal affairs of Bulgaria.

As I shall make clear later, it was the motive which caused him to form with his neighbours the Balkan League, ostensibly to free the Christians in Macedonia and Thrace from Turkish oppression. The real motive became apparent after the battle of Lule Burgas, when the Turks fled before the victorious Bulgarians.

When the Turks finally came to bay at the

lines of Chatalja, a peace whereby the Allies would have gained all they ostensibly sought was offered by Kiamil Pasha. Ferdinand, without consulting his Allies, rejected it; and against the wish of his Army Council began the attack of Chatalja, which proved so disastrous to the Bulgarian arms.

Speaking in the Sobranje in 1914, the Bulgarian delegate Kosturoff said, "As was shown later on, the only purpose was to enter Constantinople. The ambition, the boundless ambition, was to place the Cross on the Mosque of St. Sophia, in order that history should some day write, 'Simeon came once beneath the walls of Constantinople, but the Greek women broke his head there. It was Czar Ferdinand who entered Constantinople as victor.'"

This ambition of Ferdinand's, to possess Constantinople and make it the capital of a new Bulgarian Empire, has only to be grasped to enable the reader to gain a full comprehension of the policy which has thrown Ferdinand into the field of battle on the side of the Central Powers, and allied the Bulgarians in arms with their ancient and hereditary enemies the Turks. It must be remembered that the difficulty of disposing of Constantinople when the Turks shall have been deprived of its possession has remained for nearly a century the sole reason why the

crescent still floats over the minarets of Stamboul. The inevitable end of Ottoman rule in Europe, though hastened by the fatal blunder which threw Turkey into the fray with the Teuton races, was none the less inevitable in the sight of all thinking men long before the first Balkan war.

Men all over Europe conceived a new Eastern Empire, which was to spring from the union of the Christian races in the Balkans. It was to have its centre in Constantinople, the centre of a beneficent rule, where all the Balkan States were working to a common end to remove from their countries the reproach that is held in the oft-repeated phrase, the "Plague-spot of Europe."

Russia saw it as the triumph of the Slav race. France saw the Latin idea conquering Teuton "kultur." Great Britain dreamed of the victory of Christianity over the heathen. And all the time Ferdinand stood by his throne at Euxinograd, and dreamed and schemed and plotted. Races and creeds alike were of no account to Ferdinand, the man of no race who had committed apostasy in the person of his own infant son. He, the fop, the scented darling of French drawing-rooms, saw himself the heir to Constantine, the successful imitator of the great Bulgarian Czars Samuel and Simeon. They were stopped only at the walls of Constantinople; but Ferdinand did not plan to stop there.

That insane ambition governed every step he has taken for fifteen years. It brought him and Bulgaria perilously near to annihilation in the Balkan wars. It made treaties for him the veriest scraps of paper. It moulded his conduct and dictated his alliances.

How he has conducted the Bulgarian people along the path which leads away from their racial ties as well as from the obligations imposed upon them by their indebtedness for their very existence as a nation will shortly be told.

But first it will be interesting to know something more of the man who is obsessed by this wild ambition, always unattainable, but rendered doubly unattainable now by the deeds of men more ambitious, more unscrupulous, and a hundred times more powerful than he.

FERDINAND THE FUTILE

"*The Prince is undoubtedly a clever man; but he wastes his cleverness on petty matters.*"—STAMBULOFF.

CHAPTER XV

FERDINAND THE FUTILE

THE tradition that great monarchs are many-sided men has no warmer adherent than Ferdinand of Bulgaria, who is ever ready to exemplify it in his own person. To those who are familiar with his pursuits and amusements, his method of spending his days constitutes a most cruel parody upon the thousand different avocations of his "glorious ally" the Kaiser. But the Kaiser, as I have had occasion to show elsewhere, is in many respects a remarkable and successful man, who makes practical use of his wide store of information. Ferdinand's alleged serious occupations are a daily round of sheer futilities.

For instance, some portion of the Kaiser's day was always spent in reading a selection of Press cuttings carefully chosen for him, and by this means he was able to keep abreast with current news, commerce, inventions, and art.

Ferdinand is also a close student of newspapers, which he studies with the sole object of reading what is written about himself. When he finds anything that displeases him, he tears up the offending news-sheet into little pieces, swearing most savagely.

When he first went to Bulgaria, there was great destruction of newspapers by him, for it was hard to find a paper that could say anything good about him. Indeed, it is recorded that his mother, Princess Clementine, wept tears of pure joy when for the first time she saw an appreciative account of her darling in an important French daily.

Stambuloff annoyed the Prince beyond all forgiveness by his early comments on this weakness. "Do not read so many papers," he used to say, "but study public affairs. Get a French or English colonel to teach you the elements of military knowledge, so that you may be able to understand your War Minister." But Ferdinand's egotism caused this excellent if blunt counsel to be rejected; and to this day he is unable really to understand his War Minister.

After a time he evolved a fine method of seeing nice things about himself in the papers. Any one can do it, especially a reigning Prince. The art lies in being very kind to journalists—of a certain type. Once Ferdinand had mastered

this art; which is colloquially known as "squaring the Press"—no Prince got so many favourable notices as he. He was just as confidential and communicative to a foreign journalist as he was reticent and baffling to a Bulgarian notable.

Yet Ferdinand, among other qualifications, is the easiest monarch to interview in all Europe, and is almost as accessible as some of the dusky princes of Afric's sunny interior. The scene is usually *mon fumoir*, and begins with the exhibition of a sketch of the Czar's predecessor, Prince Alexander of Battenberg—"Bulgaria's hero," says Ferdinand with becoming emotion.

Then there is the stuffed eagle which Ferdinand shot himself "with a valorous gunshot," as M. Hepp says. And the little silver truck in which he keeps the first spadeful of earth dug up by himself to commemorate the opening of the railway line to Burgas. You must see that, and the golden keys of the Palace, as they were presented to him on the day he did his "sacred duty," and set foot on Bulgarian soil.

Then he rings an electric bell, to show how clever Prince Cyril has fitted out the Palace with these marvels, laying all the wires himself. All his children are bidden to cultivate useful hobbies, the Bulgarian Czar will tell you, very much after the manner of Mr. Subbubs when he has lured you to Lonelitown for a week-end.

Thus, as an American scribe who had endured the process told me, Ferdinand "pulls domestic stuff on you." He actually told one American —and his newspaper printed it—that his fondness for his children had saved his life from the vile assassin. According to Ferdinand, he was playing with his young children peacefully in the palace garden, when a Stambulovist emissary crept stealthily behind him with a dagger. But the rough man was so touched at the sight of this proud Bourbon playing with his innocent children just like any ordinary man, that he wiped away a tear, threw down his yataghan, and fled, sorely pricked by his conscience.

With some of his visitors Ferdinand affects the martyr, and tells how badly he is misunderstood, and how shamefully he is misrepresented. With others he is the genial man-of-the-world, and tells stories that involve the laying of his forefinger on the side of his long dishonourable nose—a favourite trick of his when he displays any portion of his stock of knowingness. To others again he tells stories of his kindness to animals.

On this count let me quote the beautiful anecdote of "The Prince and the Sparrow," as touchingly related by M. Hepp, who had it from the mouth of this kind-hearted monarch.

One day, when Ferdinand was out walking, he found a poor little sparrow, which had fallen

right in his path. He took it up in his hand, cherished it, and carried it with him to the Palace, where he gave orders that it should be carefully tended.

Some time later he was sitting at Council surrounded by his ministers, engrossed in serious affairs of State. At this juncture the thought of the poor little sparrow occurred to him. He rang for an attendant, and demanded instant news of the sad little cripple.

It is not astonishing, says M. Hepp, that with such a charm of sensibility the Prince attracts to him all shrinking souls.

Now read another instance of his charming sensibility, for the truth of which I can vouch, though Ferdinand himself has never related the story, to my knowledge.

Animated by a sense of duty, he set out to see the tomb of his uncle, the Prince de Joinville, at Eu, near Paris. But when, with his Grand Chamberlain, he reached the mortuary chapel, he found the door locked. The priest, it was explained, had gone away and taken the key with him. Should it be sent for? "No, no; don't trouble," said Ferdinand, immensely relieved, "let us go and get some lunch." This they did, and the subject of dead uncles was not referred to, even over the coffee.

Naturally Ferdinand dabbles in the fine arts.

He does wonderful things with a camera, and plays the piano most beautifully. Once he composed the libretto of an opera, and took some part in the arrangement of the music. When I think that the people of Sofia had to listen to that opera, my conscience smites me for some of the harsh things I have written about the Bulgarians. They have done wrong, certainly; but they have suffered. I have read that libretto, and I know.

Another much-vaunted accomplishment of the Shoddy Czar is his skill as an engine-driver. He is said to be quite at his best on the footplate of a locomotive. I remember what a commotion there was on the boulevards one summer evening when the news went round that Ferdinand was approaching Paris dressed as an engine-driver, and actually driving the locomotive of the train which was bearing him to the City of Light. What a rush there was to the railway station, and what a gang of secret police! But the Bulgarian Prince had dismounted from the cab at Abbeville, and indulged in a wash and a brush-up before he reached the city.

On another occasion, when he was staying at Bad-Neuheim, he asked permission to drive a train to Frankfort and back, and this was granted There was quite a crowd to greet him when the journey was finished, but his beaming face was

all clouded when a sarcastic lady stepped forward and handed him a bouquet inscribed with the simple word "Bravery." The best way out of the ridiculous situation that he could devise was to hand the flowers to the real engine-driver, with the remark, "This lady has confused you with me, my friend."

On another occasion he was telling some journalist of his skill on the engine-plate, and this man, wishing to please him, remarked that the accomplishment was a useful one, and might one day save his life. It was a tactless remark to make to a man of sensibility.

"I am sorry I have no locomotive now," he growled, "to escape from such silly remarks."

Yet it is difficult to imagine any use for what appears to be the nearest thing to a manly accomplishment he possesses. Unless he wants to run away from somewhere, his engine driving is hardly likely to be of any benefit to himself or anyone else.

It is a futile accomplishment, as nearly all his occupations and amusements are futile. Compared with such a king as our own, who does an immense amount of hard, useful work, in an unassuming way; or even with the Kaiser, who makes a lot of fuss, but certainly gets a good deal done, this Ferdinand is surely a make-believe monarch.

He sits in his thug-proof den, surrounded by his photographs and his absurd silver model of a railway truck and other trumpery, and allows it to be understood that his labours of State keep him up to all hours of the morning. But the net result of his labours is a new fête dress for himself, some fault-finding with the garden plans of a landscape expert, or something equally useless.

With the exception of the expensive capital, Bulgaria remains as Stambuloff left it. He claims, this shoddy Czar, that he has worked unremittingly to improve a semi-barbarous kingdom; while he has been engaged in the most trifling and useless occupations. Beyond ministering to his own inordinate vanity, and scheming darkly to some one else's disadvantage, all his occupations are as childishly futile as those I have described.

FERDINAND THE FRENCHMAN

"*It is a Prince entirely French, by tradition, by instinct, by aspiration, and by talent who was the founder of Bulgaria, and is to-day its King.*"—M. Alexandre Hepp.

CHAPTER XVI

FERDINAND THE FRENCHMAN

ONE of the lessons that Great Britain has been compelled to learn in the last two years is that its respected citizen, Mr. Black, purveyor of meat, is in reality none other than that dangerous alien Herr Schwartz, the maker of German sausages. Our gallant allies of France have been apt to wonder at the laggard hesitation of us British in learning and applying this lesson. Yet when the history of the great war comes to be written frankly and fully, it may well be revealed that one of the hardest knocks delivered to the allied cause was due to the incurably optimistic idea prevailing among Frenchmen in the highest places that Ferdinand Saxe-Coburg Cohen was really Ferdinand de Bourbon.

It is nothing to their discredit. To the very last most of us clung to the idea that the Kaiser was really an Englishman, though he did little

to foster that idea, and his upbringing, his speeches and his behaviour were shining testimony to the contrary. Ferdinand, on the other hand, had an upbringing that was essentially characteristic of the old France; not that new France which fills the whole civilized world with delight and admiration. He has constantly posed as French in culture, in sympathy and in aim. France early took him to its generous arms, and there is every excuse for the French trusting in his blandishments; the generous spirit of France is incapable of crediting that any man of French extraction could stoop to such perfidy as Ferdinand has displayed.

If France was open to the accusation of degeneracy half a century ago, the fact was largely due to the method of educating its boys. The supreme irony of fate has exacted this compensation for the horrors inflicted by Germany upon stricken France in 1870, that the full measure of punishment now impending over the Hunnish race is the result of these infamies. The new France is the outcome of that disaster, and the new Frenchman of to-day, steeled to patient endurance, yet fighting with all the dash of his ancestors, is the result of wiser methods of education.

But Ferdinand was brought up as one of the degenerate Frenchmen of the past age. At fifteen

he knew more of the dark side of life than any hardened man of the world ought to know. At twenty he was a loathsome young beast, whose only admirer was his doting mother. She was a daughter of France, and everywhere surrounded herself and her son with the historic objects she had inherited from her great French ancestors.

When Ferdinand crossed his Rubicon and ventured on that hazardous journey in disguise to Sofia, against the wish of all the European Powers, his companions on the voyage were gallant and adventurous young Frenchmen. The elegant Court he formed in Bulgaria was redeemed from absurdity by the grace, wit and refinement of these companions and their successors. The first champions of Ferdinand, and his apologists through good and evil, have been the French.

I have referred many times in this chronicle to the French biographer of Ferdinand, the enthusiastic M. Hepp. He has written so charmingly and with such obvious and honest sincerity of this Hun in French clothing that it is impossible to overlook his work. It represents current French opinion of the Bulgarian Czar, who, up to the very last moment, contrived to deceive even such keen-eyed publicists as M. Reinach.

The amazing confidences Ferdinand has made to M. Hepp are set out in this surprisingly intimate biography, in which one long chapter

is devoted to proving Ferdinand's possession by the French sentiment.

The first time that the Prince invited his biographer to dinner was on a very picturesque occasion. They were travelling together to Roumelia to take part in the rose harvest and festival at the scent farms of Kazanlik. The luxury of the train by which they travelled was extravagant. Blue velvet upholstered the ordinary compartments, the sleeping carriages were furnished in silk of turquoise tint, the dining-saloon was a mass of blue flowers in baskets. Rightly was it called the Blue Train.

Seated opposite Ferdinand in the midst of all this azure pomp, the writer was suddenly brought face to face with a fresh emotion. On every fork and spoon, on every piece of the massive silver plate was engraved the French fleur-de-lis. They marked the descent of the Bulgarian royal couple; the Prince as grandson of Louis Philippe, the Princess Marie Louise as granddaughter of Charles X.

Even more moving to his biographer was a scene enacted by Ferdinand when his mother lay awaiting burial and the mock Frenchman was dressing for the funeral. He was assuming all his decorations—German ones—when the Duc de Luynes was announced. "Come in," cried Ferdinand, and as the Duc entered he

unbuttoned his waistcoat and threw it back. There next his heart blazed the broad red ribbon of the French Legion of Honour, once worn by Louis Philippe himself.

Later Ferdinand was entitled to wear that ribbon, but this clandestine assumption of it was a piece of theatrical sentiment, justly calculated to tickle the sensibilities of the most level-headed Frenchman. As M. Hepp narrates, he afterwards told the story to three intimates, very Parisian and sceptical, and the hardest of them all was constrained to turn away his head and wipe his eyes.

It is interesting to note how Ferdinand played upon this French sympathy, and how adroitly he made use of it. From Paris he arranged the reconciliation with Russia which followed the conversion of Prince Boris to the Orthodox faith, and France was the first country to fête him in the ceremonious way his heart yearned for.

"At the Élysée," writes Mr. John Macdonald, "the successor of the French kings and emperors royally entertained the Orleanist Prince who was so successfully introducing French culture and manners into a semi-Oriental land; or almost royally, for the Prince was as yet only half a king. Semi-royal honours only could be accorded to the Prince of Bulgaria; half a gala at the Opera, half a military manœuvre, and so on."

But to Ferdinand half a loaf was indeed better than no bread. When he demanded royal honours prior to a visit to England for the funeral of Queen Victoria he was bluntly told he could not have them. Therefore he decided to stay away. France, however, did her best for Ferdinand.

He paid his debts in a characteristic manner. For the reorganization of the Bulgarian Army he went to France, and there borrowed money, equipment and military advisers. The French artillery enabled the Bulgarians to score so heavily over the Turks in their first encounters, and what of generalship the Bulgarian leaders possess is undoubtedly due to their French tuition. The Bulgarian Black Sea fleet was of French organization, and its first admiral was a French naval officer named Pichon.

If further evidence was needed that Ferdinand wore a golden French heart under his hereditary German and Austrian decorations, as he wore his illicit ribbon of the Legion of Honour, let me tell you one more story from the collection of the excellent M. Hepp.

It was July 14, the anniversary of the fall of the Bastille, and Ferdinand had asked to his Varna Palace M. Bourgarel, the French Minister at Sofia, and the faithful Hepp. They dined in the open air at the foot of Mount Vitosch.

Suddenly, from behind a thicket, there rose the strains of the Marseillaise, while Ferdinand, rising to his feet, shouted "Vive la France!"

Yes, France felt very sure of Ferdinand, and Bulgaria could always count upon warm friendship in Paris, and wherever French influence was felt. His perfidy was not suspected till nearly the end of 1914 when M. Joseph Reinach, who had maintained a long correspondence with him ever since their first meeting in 1906, began to form suspicions. He framed a letter to Ferdinand on February 11, 1915, to the effect that he had to express the uneasiness he was feeling, and which all the French friends of Bulgaria and its Czar felt at recent news.

Ferdinand, in a letter signed "The Good European," his usual signature in this correspondence, told him not to believe the news, adding, "My sentiments remain unchanged." Even then he was bargaining with the enemies of France to betray the cause of the Entente and of the small nations!

The Bulgarian treaty with Germany was signed on July 17, but on August 15 Ferdinand's Minister, M. Dobrovitch, was writing to Paris expressing false hopes of a future Russian success, and holding out elusive promises that Bulgaria would intervene on the side of the Allies.

"A more shameful comedy has never been

enacted," writes M. Reinach, in concluding the story of Ferdinand's final rupture with the country which he claimed was dearest of all to him, the country of his mother and of his own upbringing.

FERDINAND THE FAITHLESS

"*Ingratitude is the only unforgivable sin.*"—Old Bulgarian Proverb.

"*Ferdinand is a clever man, but not to be trusted.*"—King Edward VII.

CHAPTER XVII

FERDINAND THE FAITHLESS

IN the chief square of Sofia, near the Newski Cathedral, stands a great statue, the work of the Bulgarian sculptor Zocchi. It is erected to the Russian Czar, Alexander the Second, "the Czar Liberator." A similar statue has been erected in the ancient Bulgarian capital of Tirnovo. In every peasant hut in Bulgaria a portrait of the same benefactor is hung; sometimes it disputes wall space with pictures of Gladstone and Lord Salisbury. These are some of the outward signs that Bulgaria has allowed a despicable foreigner to lead them into the deadliest ingratitude, and to make them pay their debt for national existence by the basest perfidy of which a whole nation has ever been guilty.

When the Russians discovered the survival of the ancient Bulgarians they found a race of

hopeless outcasts, groaning under a Turkish tyranny that has its recent parallel in the Turkish treatment of the Christian Armenians. Later, when the most enterprising Bulgarians sought to free themselves from this intolerable oppression, the only means open to them were those resorted to by outlaws and murderers. They became modern Robin Hoods, without any of the elementary decency which characterized the behaviour of that legendary English hero.

Russia from the very outset recognized the claims imposed upon her by racial and religious affinity to the Bulgarians. How generously she paid that obligation may be read in the terms of the treaty of San Stefano. The Powers of Europe saw fit to revise the terms of that treaty, and Britain's sympathy for small and oppressed people ensured that the nation so revived by Russia should not be blotted out of existence.

The Bulgaria created by the treaty of Berlin was a small and unimportant Principality. Its aggrandisement has been effected by innumerable breaches of that compact, one of which was the very assumption by Ferdinand of the throne. For that reason the new Prince, as I have already told, was not recognized by the Powers, and his vanity made their recognition all important to him.

The policy of Stambuloff, who then guided the

destinies of Bulgaria, was to free the young State from any preponderance of Russian influence. Adherence to that policy would have delayed the recognition Ferdinand sought, and for that elementary reason he betrayed Stambuloff, and became morally guilty of his assassination. By contriving the apostasy of his heir, he so far placated Russia that his position was recognized. From that time forward he always professed the most profuse gratitude to the great Slav Power to which he owed his place and Bulgaria owed its very existence.

Is there any need to elaborate the sordid treachery of his conduct? As a bachelor Prince his life was not worth a day's purchase at any time. In order that he might marry, Stambuloff had the Constitution amended, thereby earning an unpopularity with the Church party which contributed largely to his fall. He had already made himself detested by the army because of the severity with which he crushed out the plots against the life of his ungrateful Prince.

The services he had rendered to Ferdinand were made the weapons of his undoing. Dismissed, impoverished and persecuted with the vilest charges, Stambuloff was imprisoned in Sofia until such time as his murder could be contrived. And while his minister's unavenged blood was yet warm this monster of ingratitude was concluding

with the dead man's enemies a pact in which blasphemy and treachery played equal parts. For the patronage of Russia he caused a child of three to become an apostate from the faith in which he had been baptized, and broke the heart of his gentle Princess.

That he lived to betray the friendship for which he paid such an infamous price will be made abundantly clear. In the meantime Bulgaria's lip service to Russia is worth considering.

"We find Russian graves scattered all over our country," wrote the *Mir* at the time of Stambuloff's fall. "The men who rest in them shed their blood for us. But where are the English, Italian, Austrian, German graves?"

When Ferdinand entered Bulgaria and was received in Sofia, the Metropolitan Bishop reminded him of the national debt, after a few words of personal welcome, saying, "This people is grateful to Russia, who made immense sacrifices for our deliverance, and to whom we owe our liberty and independence. Do not then forget these sacrifices, and use your best efforts to re-establish relations between Russia and Bulgaria —to reconcile the Liberator and the liberated."

A quarter of a century later the *Mir* was writing: "The healthiest minds among the Bulgarian people, realizing that they were freed

by Russia in the name of the same idea which at this moment is creating a great Slav Empire, are conscious of the existence of a bond of blood, but are unable to act in accordance with it."

They were unable, because Ferdinand had made it impossible. How he had done this is explained by M. Buroff, once a minister and a leading Bulgarian publicist. In the *Almanac of the National Party*, for 1915, he explains that the Court gave strong support to all opposition to Russia. All other views lead their holders to persecution and dismissal. In the Army "the higher the rank held by an officer, the more dependent he is upon his expressed hatred of Russia. It is the means by which officers may secure the dignity of generalship. It is from the Court that this poison spreads as if by some mysterious agency."

How widespread this poison was, and how effectively Ferdinand had broken all ties that should have bound Bulgaria to the great Mother of the Slav races was recognized in Russia. The fact provoked an outburst from the Russian poet Andreef, which might well have shamed a less cynical people to some revolt against a king so monstrously treacherous.

"The Slav world is stricken with shame, and turns its eyes earthward whenever the name Bulgarian is mentioned, in the same way as an

honourable family is ashamed of the unworthy member. You Bulgars have a Slav heart but German brains, and your tongue, like that of the snake, is split in twain. . . . If the Germans keep you fastened like sheep within the fold while your brothers' blood is being spilled, or if your shepherds lead you along the pathway of treachery and you, like other belligerents, commence to banish the Russians from Bulgaria, then first of all, take from your midst the monument of Alexander's tomb—he who freed you —for he also was a Russian."

M. Joseph Reinach, who was first introduced to Ferdinand by King Edward VII, and who maintained a correspondence with him, has declared that when the time comes for the final publication of the documents relative to the Bulgarian treachery, they will furnish an example of disloyalty and treachery unexampled in the records of the chancellery.

"I am very sure," adds this authority, "that if the Russians, instead of being conquered in Poland and Galicia, had won, the Czar of the Bulgarians would have treated with the Triple Alliance instead of betraying his past and his honour in selling his armies to the Germans."

"Russia was trusting, and I myself was deceived into believing with Shakespeare, that there is no such thing as an utterly bad man.

The Serbians have a proverb which explains Russia's blind faith in the Shoddy Czar. 'A woman who has wet-nursed a calf loves it like her own child.' So Russia loved Bulgaria, a circumstance which makes Bulgaria's crime more detestable still."

FERDINAND THE HUN

"*There is nothing I detest as much as a German.*"—THE PRINCESS CLEMENTINE.

CHAPTER XVIII

FERDINAND THE HUN

WHEN Ferdinand first rode through the streets of Sofia in a carriage, wearing the uniform of a Bulgarian general, there was an ominous murmur in the Bulgarian crowd that rose and swelled to a hoarse cry of "Schwaba." It was as if a French crowd had cried "Boche" or an English mob had roared "Hun." Austrian rank and French pretence did not blind the Bulgarians at the very outset; they knew they had to do with one of the detested Schwaba, a Hun of the Huns.

Do what he might, Ferdinand could not lift the reproach among the race he chooses to call his adopted people. To them, now as ever, he is the Hun. In normal times they turn away their heads as the Schwaba drives by; when he has done anything special to annoy them they gather under his palace windows and yell, "Down with the modern Nero." No wonder Ferdinand

prefers to spend the major portion of his time in the country at Euxinograd, or on the Coburg-Cohen estates in Hungary, where, as the Count of Murany, he is fond of assuring his visitors that he is now in his "second Fatherland."

When he dismissed Stambuloff, he remarked, "Henceforth I mean to govern as well as to rule." It was much what the Kaiser said when he got rid of Bismarck, but Ferdinand had a counsellor of greater experience than any of those who were called to the assistance of William II when Bismarck had been humiliated. He had always his wise old mother at his elbow, the shrewdest and most disinterested adviser that any princeling was ever blessed with. And, by following the advice of his mother, he contrived to convert his very temporary occupation of the Bulgarian throne into a permanency unexpected in any of the European Chancelleries.

Ferdinand was aided in his scheme of governing Bulgaria by the very mixed state of the political parties in that country. Of these parties there are no less than ten, a circumstance which in itself is most favourable to the underhand methods which are a second nature to the man who calls himself the Czar of the Bulgarians. But the foreign policy of this parvenu principality involved the exercise of an immensity of tact and discretion, and Ferdinand found the experience,

the ability and the connexions of his mother more than invaluable; they were indispensable.

It must be said for him that he followed implicitly the instructions of this counsellor in petticoats, even in the matter of his marriage. She enabled him to play off the influence of Russia against the growing pretensions of Austria, and to keep Bulgaria in a position to benefit, whatever the differences between the pair might be.

But princesses cannot live for ever, not even such fine and wise old ladies as the Princess Clementine. In 1907 she died, and among the many mourners who gathered at her graveside there was no one who had such good cause to regret her loss as the son whom she had put on a throne, and kept there in the face of the most discouraging circumstances.

Just at this time there was a new and potent influence making itself felt in Austria. The Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir to the throne, had recovered all the influence he had lost by his chivalrous adherence to his morganatic bride. She too, by the exercise of the wonderful qualities that had won her the whole-souled love of this remarkable man, had gained the admiration and esteem of the aged Emperor. The influence of the heir to the throne ran through all the affairs of Austria, and it was Ferdinand's lot to come under that powerful influence at the very time when he

was deprived of his loving and long-tried adviser, the woman who had shaped his life to success.

Austria to-day remains the sole Power of Europe where the old order still reigns. But in the year 1907 the old Emperor, and the Council chamber where he presided, was swayed by the most remarkable exemplar of the new order that Europe then knew. Abler than the Kaiser, and equally as ambitious and unscrupulous politically, Franz Ferdinand had formed schemes for the aggrandisement of Austria equally as far-reaching as those which William had initiated for the expansion of Germany.

While the Kaiser was dreaming of world politics, the Archduke was maturing schemes to turn the Adriatic into an Austrian lake. They included the disappearance of such States as Serbia and Montenegro, and threatened in the same way the existence of Bulgaria. The extinction of the dual kingdoms in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and the creation of a military and naval power equal in might to Germany itself, were all parts of the ambitious design of this man.

His silent power, the mysterious but pervading influence he exercised in all parts of the Austrian Empire, his rapid marshalling of all the ablest men of the country to his side, deeply impressed Ferdinand, who was in the closest touch with Austrian

affairs. His visits to Vienna became more frequent, and the Count de Murany and Franz Ferdinand spent much time together.

At this time Ferdinand decided to marry once more, and as his mother was no longer there to control his choice, it fell upon a German bride, who was of the Lutheran faith. The Princess Eleonore of Reuss-Koestritz was worthy of a better man than Ferdinand of Bulgaria. At this time she was nearly fifty years of age, and her most memorable exploit had been her devoted service to the Russian wounded in the war with Japan. That service to humanity she has since amplified by Red Cross work among the wounded Bulgarians that entitles her to the respect and admiration of the whole world.

Her brother, Prince Henry of Reuss, had been one among the many princes to whom the Bulgarian throne had been offered in vain before that scene in an Austrian beer garden took place, as related in the opening chapter of this narrative. The connexion was very valuable to Ferdinand; in fact, it was a proof of his rise in life that such a house and such a Princess would condescend to him.

But the religious question again rose to trouble the Bulgarian Prince. He was himself a Catholic; the State religion of Bulgaria was the Orthodox Church, and the bride was a Lutheran. So he

devised no less than three wedding ceremonies. The first was a "civil" ceremony, which took place at Gera, the capital of the State of Reuss. Then the pair went off to Coburg, where they were married according to the rites of the Roman Catholic Church in the Cathedral of St. Augustine. A return to Gera was necessary for the Lutheran ceremony in the Chapel of Osterstein castle. Then, at last, Ferdinand considered himself well and truly married.

But once more he was in trouble with the Pope, Pius X, who succeeded that Leo XIII who gave him such a dressing down for the apostasy of his infant heir. This Pope would have nothing to do with him, and it was said in the best informed circles was preparing an edict of excommunication for his continued impiety, culminating in this marriage with a Protestant. But Ferdinand was now to reap the benefit of his friendship with Franz Ferdinand; the heir to the Austrian Empire interceded for him, and the blow was averted.

When Ferdinand took his German bride to Sofia, he was again received with hoots and yells of "Schwaba," but he did not care. It is only right to say that the greeting was not aimed at the lady, whom the Bulgarians soon took into their favour. She has since been a good mother to the Bulgarian Royal children, and a kind and humane queen to the suffering soldiers of Bulgaria.

But the satisfaction of Ferdinand was not due to any anticipation of these things. What pleased him was that at last he was invited to Schonbrun to meet the old Austrian Emperor. The attitude of Francis Joseph had always been such as to make Ferdinand repeat the anxious question of Mr. Dick Swiveller, when a meeting was in question. "Is the Old Min friendly?" he might well have asked when the invitation was conveyed to him by Franz Ferdinand. For the aged Emperor had called him a "felon" and other uncomplimentary things, and sternly refused to have anything to do with him. Small wonder if Ferdinand was anxious about his reception.

But he took his bride to Schonbrun, and the influence of the Austrian heir was shown by the fact that the "Old Min" was indeed friendly. He toasted Ferdinand and his bride in glowing terms that created a mild sensation throughout Europe. This Ferdinand was pleased, in a subsequent interview, to attribute to his own great merits. "The welcome accorded me by the Emperor Francis Joseph, and his cordial toast," he said, "were, I venture to say, the deserved reward of the work which I had in more than twenty years accomplished in Bulgaria. They were in no degree the declaration of any compact." Ferdinand has always been a good denier.

It was a great stroke for Ferdinand. A little

while afterwards Stancioff, his Foreign Minister, was able to boast with truth in the Sobranje that—

"Honours generally reserved for independent sovereigns are now rendered to the Prince of Bulgaria. The Great Powers are represented here by their ministers plenipotentiary. While our army is esteemed abroad, its Commander-in-Chief (the Prince) holds honorary rank in the armies of foreign States. Our Government is faithful to its international engagements, and is desirous of developing intercourse with other peoples." And so on. And all the time Ferdinand was the vassal of the Sultan of Turkey.

But not for much longer. For now the Young Turks rose and tore the Red Sultan from the throne, and Ferdinand was able to give a practical demonstration of the meaning of the strange friendliness of the "Old Min."

FERDINAND THE CZAR

"*With pride and thanksgiving I accept the title of Bulgarian Czar offered me by the nation and the Government.*"—FERDINAND OF BULGARIA.

CHAPTER XIX

FERDINAND THE CZAR

THE Young Turk revolution could only have been viewed by Ferdinand, and by his master, Franz Ferdinand, as a serious blow to their schemes of aggrandisement in the Balkans. Their whole pretext for interference was supplied by the oppression of the Christian nations in Thrace, Macedonia and Albania by the minions of the Red Sultan. And now the Red Sultan was no more a Sultan, and the new Sultan was put into power with the mission of remedying the grievances of these Christian subjects of Turkey.

Ferdinand was still a vassal Prince, and by the terms of the Treaty of Berlin bound to remain a vassal Prince. The Provinces of Bosnia and Herzegovina, by the terms of the same treaty, only existed under the protection of the Austrian Empire. If the new Turkish administration should prove honest and successful, the schemers

would be hard put to it for an excuse for the interference they had planned.

But excuses are easily found by men like Ferdinand of Bulgaria. The new Turkish Ministry gave a dinner in Constantinople to the representatives of the Great Powers. Naturally they left out M. Gueschoff, the Bulgarian political Agent in Constantinople, who was nothing but the servant of Turkey's own vassal. But Ferdinand took offence at this slight, and seizing a section of the Orient Express railway, promptly proclaimed Bulgaria's independence of Turkey.

In the same moment Austria took possession in full of the provinces of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the breach of the Treaty of Berlin thus became a huge one. The full nature of the plot was revealed when Germany, which was bound like all the other Powers signing the treaty to insist on its observance, backed the position of Austria and Bulgaria. In the words of the Kaiser, Germany stood by "in shining armour." The prospect of a world struggle, since realized, was afforded to a startled civilization. But it was averted, and the schemers carried out their plan successfully.

On October 5, 1908, Ferdinand rode into the ancient Bulgarian capital of Tirnovo, incidentally falling off his horse in the process, and was crowned Czar of Bulgaria, the regalia to which allusion has been made in the course of this



The poorest of royal horsemen, Ferdinand enters Sofia as Czar for the first time, with two men at the head of his horse for the purpose of controlling it.

narrative having been taken out of pawn and furbished up for the occasion. The happy peasantry danced the national dances once more, and the streets of the city afforded a spectacle seldom seen off the stage of the luxurious musical comedy theatres of the pre-war era.

The Coronation ceremony took place in the Church of the Forty Martyrs, and afterwards Ferdinand walked to the Hissar, or castle of the old Czars of Bulgaria. No more perilous riding for him that day! And there, in the hall where Czar Simeon and the rest of them used to feast—and plan to gouge out the eyes of the Byzantine Greeks—he read the following bombastic proclamation:—

"By the will of our never-to-be-forgotten Liberator and the great kindred Russian nation, aided by our good friends and neighbours the subjects of the King of Rumania, by the Bulgarian heroes on February 18, 1878, chains of slavery were broken by which for so many centuries Bulgaria, once a great and glorious Power, was bound. From that time till to-day, for full thirty years, the Bulgarian nation, preserving the memory of those who had laboured for its freedom and inspired by their tradition, has worked incessantly for the development of its beautiful country, and under my guidance and that of the departed Prince Alexander, has made it a

nation fit to take an equal place in the family of civilized peoples, and endowed with gifts of cultural and economic progress.

"While proceeding on this path nothing should arrest the progress of Bulgaria, nothing should hinder her success. Such is the desire of the nation, such its will.

"Let that desire be fulfilled! The Bulgarian nation and its chief can have but one sentiment, one desire.

"Practically independent, the nation was impeded in its normal and peaceful development by certain illusions and formal limitations, which resulted in a coldness of relations between Turkey and Bulgaria. I and the nation desire to rejoice in the political development of Turkey. Turkey and Bulgaria, free and independent of each other, may exist under conditions which will allow them to strengthen their friendly relations and to devote themselves to peaceful internal development.

"Inspired by the sacred purpose of satisfying national requirements and fulfilling the national desire, I proclaim, with the blessing of the Almighty, Bulgaria—united since September 6, 1885—an independent kingdom. Together with the nation I firmly believe that this act will meet with the approbation of the Great Powers."

Then Ferdinand gave the signal and the beauty

chorus obliged once more with the national dances. At last he was Czar of the Bulgarians.

It must have been disheartening to such a whole-souled friend of liberty and progress to find "the great kindred Russian nation" was very angry at his duplicity, and accused him of an arrangement with Austria. This he denied most emphatically, as I have told, and in an amazing Press interview explained what a misunderstood man he was. He said :—

"The mission which I am fulfilling here in the Balkans must be thoroughly understood. I have devoted myself entirely to the people which I adopted twenty-two years ago. It possesses wonderful virtues. It is sober, hard-working, proud, jealous of its independence and freedom. A nation from which is recruited the admirable and large army that you have seen, and which cheerfully bears the military burdens imposed upon it by necessity, is one of the strong nations, with a fine future before it.

"But the Bulgarian, after so many years of servitude, barely liberated as he is from the Mussulman yoke, still remains concentrated in himself. He has not learned to look outside his country. All his universe is contained between his mountains, the Black Sea, and the Danube. It is I who do duty for him as the watchman, who is incessantly scanning the distant horizon.

It is I who pick up for him rumours from abroad, who communicate his aspirations, his desires, and legitimate claims to the foreigner. I am like the lung which breathes the outside air for him, and which assimilates for him the refreshing breezes which come from the rest of the world. Owing, above all, to its Sovereign, Bulgaria does not remain isolated and shut up in herself, and she constitutes a portion of the European family."

This was Ferdinand's way of conveying to the Liberator nation of Russia that, having got all he could expect from that source, he had taken up with new friends. The Watchman "scanning the distant horizon" had discerned the effort that the German nations were preparing to snatch the mastery of Europe, and had thrown in the lot of the people he had so kindly adopted with the pirates. But Russia, then and for long afterwards, was unable to believe that his perfidy was as complete as recent events have proved it.

Russia continued to exert itself for the freedom of the Slav peoples from the Turk; for the Young Turk proved to be still the same old Turk, and the bitter cry of Macedonia was not stilled by the departure of Abdul the Damned into exile.

The theft of Bosnia and Herzegovina had brought the Austrians right down on to the border of poor little Serbia, which needed immediate protection from the ambitious schemes of

the heir to the throne, as much as the Serbians outside Serbia itself needed help against the persecuting Turk. In such circumstances it was the task of Russia to unite the Balkan nations by a treaty which would make them mutually defensive against their foes, and it was such a treaty that Ferdinand was presently called upon by his Ministers to sign.

FERDINAND AND THE BALKAN LEAGUE

"*May God preserve Bulgaria from the consequences.*"—FERDINAND OF BULGARIA.

CHAPTER XX

FERDINAND AND THE BALKAN LEAGUE

THE independent kingdom of Bulgaria occupied a very different position in the eyes of the Powers to that of the vassal Principality. Soon Ferdinand began to feel some of the disadvantages of greatness, and to recognize the responsibilities he had incurred by his coup with Austria. He had incurred the suspicion of Russia and Rumania on the one side, and the enmity of Serbia on the other, while Turkey was only biding its time to avenge his share in the breaking of the Berlin Treaty.

The new rêgime in Turkey was no better than the old, and the atrocities in Macedonia continued, Bulgarian and Turkish bands vying with one another in cruelty and oppression. Russia's remedy for this state of things was a league of the Balkan States for mutual defence, and eventually all except Rumania were induced to come to an

agreement. In this agreement the protecting hand of Russia obtained for Serbia a measure of protection from Austria equivalent to that guaranteed to Bulgaria against the vengeful Turk.

Thus in the treaty between Serbia and Bulgaria it was agreed that for purposes of mutual defence Bulgaria must put into the field at least 200,000 men, and Serbia not less than 150,000. Article 3 of the military convention between these two nations stipulated "If Austria-Hungary attacks Serbia or sends her army into the Sandjak of Novi-Bazar, Bulgaria engages herself to declare war upon Austria at once, and to send into Serbia an army which shall not be less than 200,000 soldiers strong, and which, in association with the Serbian army, shall engage in offensive and defensive operations against Austria-Hungary."

Now Ferdinand wanted an alliance against Turkey, but not an alliance against Austria. When this treaty was presented to him by his Ministers for signature he demurred, and sent it back for the deletion of the offending clause. But Russia was firm, and threatened to withdraw her support of the alliance unless the clause protecting Serbia against Austria were included. Then Ferdinand signed; and throwing down the pen dramatically exclaimed—

"May God preserve Bulgaria from the consequences!"

The treaty was signed on February 29, 1912.

Then Ferdinand prepared his coup against Turkey without further loss of time. The pretext for the mobilization of the Bulgarian army, which was ordered on October 5, 1912, was the "massacre" of Kochana, a town in Macedonia, close to the Bulgarian border. It began with a bomb explosion contrived by Ferdinand's own emissaries, and followed with reprisals on both sides.

Then Ferdinand ordered the mobilization of the army, and issued a proclamation in his very best style. Here are some extracts:—

"The tears of the Balkan slave and the groaning of millions of Christians could not but stir our hearts, the hearts of their kinsmen and co-religionists, who are indebted for our peaceful life to a great Christian Liberator, and the Bulgarian nation has often remembered the prophetic words of the Czar Liberator, 'The work is begun, it must be carried through.'

"I bring to the cognisance of the Bulgarian nation that war is declared. I order the brave Bulgarian army to march on the Turkish territory; at our sides, and with us will fight, for the same object against a common enemy, the armies of the Balkan States allied to Bulgaria—Serbia, Greece and Montenegro. And in this struggle of the Cross against the Crescent, of liberty against

tyranny, we shall have the sympathy of all those who love justice and progress. . . . Forward, may God be with you."

Then they danced the national dances and sang the national songs in the streets of Sofia, and carefully rehearsed shouts were raised of "Long live our heroic Czar!"

It is not within the compass of this narrative to enter into the details of the first Balkan war. The Bulgarian army fought as might have been expected, with a savage bravery. The behaviour of its soldiery eclipsed the worst exploits of the Huns in Belgium. These peasants were only one generation more advanced in civilization than the eye-gouging heroes of the old Czars, and nothing could restrain them.

They beat the Turks at Kirk Kilisse and Lule Burgas, and pursued the flying enemy, by Ferdinand's order, to the very lines of Chatalja. They laid siege to Adrianople, and had he not interfered, would have soon entered that city and butchered the bulk of its Turkish inhabitants. But Ferdinand preferred to be away at Carlsbad when any butchery was going on, and interfered, so that the capture of the city was delayed until a strong Serbian force came on the scene, and hastened its surrender.

The Greeks, as is well known, made straight for Salonica, of which important port they took

possession. The Montenegrins did wonders on the Adriatic coast, while the Serbians were equally successful in their sphere of the war; and, as I have said, helped to bring about the fall of Adrianople.

But Ferdinand's attempt to force a way to Constantinople failed, and the Bulgarian army got a severe handling at the lines of Chatalja. On November 1, Ferdinand had rejected a peace proposal from Turkey, without communicating it to his Allies; but by the end of the year he was trying to make peace with Turkey, again without his Allies. The fall of Adrianople in March brought to a head the disagreement of the Allies about the division of the conquered territory.

Then, according to the treaties which bound the Balkan States, the differences should have been referred to Russia for arbitration. The clause of the treaties which imposed this condition is worth quoting:—

"Every difference which may be manifested concerning the interpretation and execution of any of the stipulations of the treaty, its secret annex, or military conventions, is to be submitted to the final decision of Russia as soon as one or other party declares that it is impossible to reach an agreement with the other party by direct negotiation."

But a reference of his claims to Russia was the last thing Ferdinand wanted. His hesitation at signing the clause protecting Serbia against Austria had not won him the confidence of Russia, and he feared that he would not have anything the best of such arbitration. Serbia was now seeking an outlet to the Adriatic, as the reward for her share in the fighting, and this ambition was opposed to all Austrian interests. Ferdinand again began to intrigue with Austria, and to palter with Russia and his allies. He dismissed his pacific Prime Minister, M. Gueschoff, and ordered Dr. Daneff to form a ministry. That ministry resisted arbitration by every means in its power.

Meanwhile Ferdinand was preparing for a treacherous attack upon the forces of his Allies. The Bulgarian armies were concentrated upon the Macedonian borders, and secret preparations of great elaboration were pushed forward.

At midnight on June 29, the Serbians and Greeks along the entire front were suddenly and violently attacked. As they had not expected this act of treachery, they were driven back in wild confusion. But they soon rallied, and at the same time Bulgaria had to submit to an invasion from the fresh troops of Rumania. Turkey again moved forward, and the Bulgarians found themselves unable to resist the combination of enemies

against them. Ferdinand was forced to sign the disadvantageous Treaty of Bucarest.

Thus Ferdinand's treachery met its due reward. What it cost Bulgaria at the time will now be related. What it will eventually cost Bulgaria cannot yet be detailed, but it is certain that the peasant State has not yet paid a tithe of the price of ranging itself on the side of the Huns.

FERDINAND THE MARTYR

"*If God and my foes grant me life, we shall go on, and my children, my successors, will follow the road on which I have been the pioneer.*"—FERDINAND OF BULGARIA.

CHAPTER XXI

FERDINAND THE MARTYR

THE Treaty of Bucarest was followed in Bulgaria by what Ferdinand, in an interview with a British newspaper correspondent, pathetically described as a "schemozzle." You may remember that among his many accomplishments a facile use of Yiddish speech takes high rank.

And really, considering how furiously the Bulgarians had fought, and how freely they shed their blood, it is not surprising that they were angry with him. All their neighbours had got something substantial, even Rumania, which had not taken up arms against the Turks. And Bulgaria was the poorer by a substantial slice of territory extorted from Ferdinand by his Rumanian neighbours. The Turks had regained possession of Macedonia, including the city of Adrianople. The Greeks had the coveted ports

of Salonica and Kavalla on the Ægean. The Serbians, though they had not found their way out to the Adriatic, had Thrace, and a long railway line from Belgrade through Uskub, with an outlet through Greek territory to Salonica.

Each of the ten Bulgarian political parties blamed one of the leaders of another party, but all united in giving chief part of the blame to Ferdinand himself. And in this, there can be no doubt, they were quite right.

Ferdinand himself was indeed in a bad way. He had offended Russia beyond all chance of recovery in her good graces. He had lost every trick in the game, and his dreams of being crowned in Constantinople had melted into thin air. In his extremity he turned to his Austrian friends for sympathy. It was characteristic of him that he should go off to Vienna disguised as the Count of Murany. He went for advice and sympathy to his friend Franz Ferdinand. But this astute person refused to see him. Moreover, the semi-official Press of Vienna came out with a demand that Ferdinand should be required to leave the Austrian capital. He was, they said, a dangerous and undesirable visitor. So Ferdinand went quietly back to Sofia, taking with him a sheaf of Press cuttings to prove, at any rate, that the Austrians were no friends of his.

There were no national dances to welcome him

home. Instead a crowd assembled under the Palace windows and moaned, "Down with the Balkan Nero." And the students had got a pot of tar and a big brush and scrawled on the Palace walls, in letters two feet long, "To Let."

The students had reason to be angry with him. He had never really liked the students of Sofia, and when the attack on his Allies was made, he had arranged that a regiment, mainly composed of students and other advanced thinkers, young men of position in Bulgaria, should be placed in a position without support where they were sure to be badly cut up. This had leaked out, and Ferdinand was more unpopular than ever with the youth and intellect of Sofia. "Down with the Balkan Nero," they cried; and Ferdinand shuddered to hear them.

Then it was announced that the King was about to abdicate in favour of Prince Boris. The latter had borne himself gallantly in the war, and was popular, compared to his father. The rumour of his impending resignation made things easier for Ferdinand, and he did not deny that rumour. He posed as a martyr and a victim of Russian intrigue. And the curious part of it is that he got people to believe him, and especially English people.

Ferdinand has always been very polite to foreign journalists, and in his hour of need this

facile courtesy served him well. By this time few people in this country knew what all the fighting was about, or whether Greece, Serbia, Bulgaria or Rumania was in the wrong about the second Balkan war. What they did know was that the Bulgarians had administered the principal trouncings to the Turk, and had come out of the struggle worse off than when they entered.

On broad principles it was considered that Ferdinand had been most unfairly treated. The theory that the Balkan States should be limited by racial conditions has also prevailed in this country, among such people as were interested enough to give the matter a single thought. It is an excellent theory but for the fact that the average Macedonian peasant prefers to belong to the race which has the strongest band of murderers in the neighbourhood.

In any case, Ferdinand, who had a keen nose for sympathy, saw that his treachery could be covered by a sufficient amount of brazen complaining and posing. If he ever had any thought of abdicating he quickly laid it aside. He was quick to recognize that the worst that could possibly happen to him had already happened, and that the Great Powers would see that Bulgaria was shorn of no more territory. He set diligently to work to obscure the real facts of the

second Balkan war; he has been obscuring them ever since.

At home he fomented disputes among the party politicians, and managed to switch them on to a discussion about which the Bulgarians have written whole libraries of books. He did not care who or what they blamed; let them only keep on arguing and their fury would spend itself in words. He was right; they continued to argue about the events of June, 1913, until they had something more cogent to engage their attention.

Meanwhile Ferdinand returned to the simple life. He found in his old hobbies of botany and ornithology a new charm; they took him much into the country and out of the cries of the enraged students. He added a new hobby, and interested himself much in animals. Soon an interested world was informed that he was spending his leisure in taming elephants.

The pro-German party in Bulgaria wished him to strive with his Austrian and German friends for a revision of the Treaty of Bucarest. Our own authorities on Balkan questions openly proclaimed that unless that were done, there was nothing that could save his crown for Ferdinand. The Sofiote Press began to publish stories of Prince Boris, showing what a hero he was, and how well fitted to rule in place of his unworthy father.

But if Ferdinand knows nothing else, he knows how to wait. He had waited many years for the chance of a Principality. He waited ages to bring about the downfall of Stambuloff. He waited even longer for the recognition by the Powers of Europe of his claim to be considered Prince of Bulgaria; and he waited nearly a quarter of a century to declare himself Czar of Bulgaria and independent of Turkey. None knows better than he the virtue of masterly inaction.

From the haven of Euxinograd—"My Sandringham," as he used to call it when speaking to British visitors—he followed with interest the storm that was raging in Sofia. He cultivated sedulously every influence that was opposed to his old friends and supporters, and threw all his weight into the growing friendship arising between Bulgaria and Turkey, the two sufferers from the Balkan wars. His plans were simple enough; he wished to promote revolutionary outbreaks in Serbian Thrace, and to foster the Austrian influence in Sofia.

But he acted throughout by means of agents. Ostensibly he was living the simple life, and posing as an injured and misunderstood monarch. The fierce winds of controversy in Sofia in which he was made a target by all the controversialists did not blow upon him. He could see the storm-

clouds thickening in the Balkans, and spent more and more time on his throne seat on the seashore, looking out to Constantinople.

And while he was living the simple home life at Euxinograd, the storm at Sofia actually did blow itself out; and the great European storm burst and carried away all the fastenings of civilization.

But first it will be amusing and instructive to take a peep at him as the simple farmer and flower-lover, living the family life far away from the cares of State and the troubles which afflict a monarch who means to be crowned in the cathedral of St. Sophia at Constantinople.

FERDINAND IN RETIREMENT

"*His disappearances correspond to the most secret depths of his soul.*"—ALEXANDRE HEPP.

CHAPTER XXII

FERDINAND IN RETIREMENT

ONCE, in the days when Ferdinand was a sub-lieutenant of Austrian hussars, the Emperor Franz Joseph stood talking to Kossuth, the Hungarian statesman, at the window of the palace. As they talked Ferdinand chanced to pass through the courtyard below, and the Emperor asked the Hungarian his opinion of the young prince.

"That boy, sire," said Kossuth, "has a long nose, but it will not be you who will pull it."

The prophecy may or may not prove an accurate one, but the personal observation was inevitable. No one can possibly look at Ferdinand without being struck by the size and prominence of his nose. "Too copious for one man," it has been pronounced, and in the modern gallery of kings there is certainly no nose like it.

For the rest, the Prince Ferdinand who first

affronted the eyes of the rough Bulgarians was an exquisite, with artificially waved and golden locks, white hands with long slim fingers, a small waist confined by obvious corsets, and cold blue eyes that sparkled with self-esteem.

A quarter of a century has not served to modify the dominance of his all-pervading nose, though it has altered the rest of the man in no small degree. The long fair moustache and the delicately tended imperial have given way to a thick crop of grey hair, and a carefully trimmed and pointed beard. His pinched figure has expanded into a burly stoutness, his fine hands have gone plump and coarse; he is no longer the "Prince Charming" of the adventure of 1887; although he still preserves his personal vanity—for not long ago he had a journalist sent to gaol for nothing more than making some rude remarks about the length of his nose. The Ferdinand we are now to see surrounded by his home influences is a man who affects the manner of a bluff country gentleman.

Of course it is not possible to speak with any confidence of the manner of a man so entirely artificial as Ferdinand. He has a separate manner for every occasion and for every person with whom he comes into contact. As we have seen, his manner to the Sofiotes is ever one of aloof and portentous gravity. This pose of the



Ferdinand allows the peasants to kiss his hand.

monarch absorbed in the affairs of State is not an original one. It is copied from the Kaiser, who has for many years taken the utmost pains to avoid smiling in public. Not long ago a photographer, to whom the Kaiser was posing, startled him into a smile by the imperious manner of his instructions. All the prints made and the negative itself had to be destroyed.

The same pose of a man immersed in matters of superhuman importance has suited Ferdinand very well in Sofia, and I have shown that it has served very well to impress the people of that city. But when he was under a cloud, and forced to remain entirely at his country palaces, one found him doing the heavy benevolent father of his people, with the unfortunate Bulgarian peasants as his victims.

The two palaces between which he divided his time were that of Vrana, a suburb of Sofia where he has an estate at the foot of Mount Vitosch, and Euxinograd, the "Sandringham" he maintains on the border of the Black Sea, which was recently shelled with good effect by the Russian fleet.

Here you might have seen Ferdinand, gotten up in a shooting suit, with gaiters, thick leather gloves and a heavy stick, walking about the farms of the peasants and prodding the cattle in the ribs with a knowing air. Nice clean old

peasant women were kept always at hand, to kiss his finger graciously extended to them, and to impress any foreign visitor with the urbanity of this monarch, and the good terms on which he existed with the simple country folk.

Let me quote his English biographer:—

"For the country people the King was a gentleman farmer, knowing everything about agriculture, tobacco-growing, wine-growing, the state of the markets, and most pleasant to gossip with. Every village on the railway line or country road along which thè King was coming would turn out its crowd of people to salute him. In an automobile journey he would stop to watch or chat with labourers at work in the fields, or at some hamlet where the teacher took care to have his young folk lined up in front of their seniors. A pathetic love for childhood is one of the distinctive traits of Czar Ferdinand's character."

One of Ferdinand's own stories is of a village teacher whom he met under such circumstances, and whom he graciously invited to come and see him if ever he visited Sofia. There was a grand levee at the palace, the story goes, and everybody was attired for the most formal of Ferdinand's formal evenings. When the revelry was at its height, a rough man in baggy brown trousers and a country coat came to the door and asked to see the King. He was promptly

told to go away. But he refused, and said he had been invited. Then a squabble took place, the rustic insisting on being allowed an entry.

In the midst of the trouble the King put in an appearance and cordially greeted his visitor. Shaking him heartily by the hand he led him through the brilliant throng to his study where he gave him refreshment. Then he conducted him about the palace, introducing him to this one and that.

That is a story that Sofia scoffs at, and that is believed by bucolic Bulgaria. And ninety per cent. of the Bulgarians are essentially bucolic.

Ferdinand takes the interest in his family that might have been expected of such a man. He has insisted that each of his four children shall have a hobby, and is more than a little proud of the electric bells which Prince Cyril has installed in the Vrana Palace. He alleges that this feat proves that the younger of his sons has a great mechanical genius, in which he takes after his father, who can drive a locomotive to perfection. It is an established theory, therefore, that eventually Prince Cyril shall succeed his father as Lord High Admiral of the handful of torpedo craft which constitute the Bulgarian fleet.

The Princesses have been taken in hand by the Czarina, and have effectually seconded her in the

works of mercy that have so occupied her leisure of recent years. Both are pretty girls resembling their gentle mother rather than Ferdinand; indeed, there is little resemblance shown to the Balkan Czar by any of his family.

Ferdinand also goes in for sport in a mild sort of way. One cannot expect many such remarkable feats as the "valorous" shot that brought down the eagle which he has had stuffed and mounted in his den. But he does considerable execution among the little birds along the seashore, when the dare-devil fit comes upon him. He has also a rooted antipathy to owls, and will go to the utmost trouble to put one of these birds out of action.

The reason is a superstitious one. He declares that when any misfortune is about to overtake him, warning is given by the circumstance of an owl settling on the flagstaff of his Euxinograd Palace. The fewer owls, of course, the less opportunity of giving warnings, and so the less likelihood of misfortune overtaking the Balkan Czar. It is a fine piece of reasoning, which involves its originator in conduct which in a man less kind-hearted might almost be accounted as cruelty.

But he makes up for his harshness to owls by a great tenderness to birds that have bright plumage or sing sweetly. To all such the Euxinograd estate is a sanctuary, and is consequently the

resort of feathered visitors from the whole country around. They, and the beautiful collection of caged birds which he maintains, form another interest to his life at this retreat.

And so, amid his tame peasants and tame birds in the seclusion of his beautiful gardens, Ferdinand waited for the home storm to blow over, and for the storm to rise without his kingdom. We understand now that he knew as well as anyone what was preparing, for he was deep in the councils of his friend Franz Ferdinand, and not without an inkling of what was in the mind of his friend's friend, the Kaiser. The scheme of these two dark-minded men to attack Russia through Serbia was now in course of execution.

Ferdinand was still leading the simple life when the world was startled and horrified by the assassination of Franz Ferdinand at Sarajevo. Who can say where the guilt of that bloody act really lies? Its effect can be discerned by the most superficial observer. While Franz Ferdinand lived there was in Austria a rival to the Kaiser in intellect, in force of character, in the art of concentrating national effort to the furtherance of his ambitious schemes.

The murder of the heir to the Austrian throne not only afforded a pretext for the attempt to inflict German predominance upon the face of Europe; it also removed from the path of Ger-

many the one man who could have prevented Austria from sinking to the position of Germany's vassal.

When the murder was done, Ferdinand, as if by a preconceived signal, returned from his retirement to actual life. He was now prepared to embark upon his last and greatest treachery, to put into execution schemes so devious and so dishonourable that all the perfidy of his early career sinks into insignificance. His part in the drama of 1914 was set and rehearsed; he now appeared on the stage, taking his cue with a promptitude that speaks volumes for the thoroughness with which he had been rehearsed.

FERDINAND THE FALSE

" *Bulgaria is the final link in th chain of German Kultur and German greatness.*"—THE KAISER.

CHAPTER XXIII

FERDINAND THE FALSE

THE murder of Franz Ferdinand and the ranging of all the Great Powers of Europe in a struggle for life or death opened up to Ferdinand a new vista of opportunity. He could see at any rate that opportunities would soon come his way to retrieve the losses of the second Balkan war. When Turkey plunged headlong into the quarrel, the opportunities of Bulgaria were multiplied tenfold, and for the first time in its existence this newest of European nations occupied a position of great importance by reason of its geographical position.

To appreciate to the full the real importance of Bulgaria's position it is necessary to take a glance at the map of Europe, as it appeared after the Treaty of Bucarest, and before Europe was convulsed by the Great War. One quick glance will show that the only European country with a frontier adjoining that of Turkey in Europe is

Bulgaria, and that it lies like a wedge between the territory of the Central Powers and that of Turkey.

In a word, a hostile Bulgaria would cut Turkey off from its allies of Germany and Austria; a neutral Bulgaria would make communication most difficult; while an allied Bulgaria would permit free passage of goods and troops between Berlin and Constantinople.

Ferdinand was quick to see the new importance he had assumed in the struggle of the nations, and eager to push his advantage to the utmost. From the very outset he was wooed most assiduously by his old friend Austria, and by Germany through Austria. On the other hand his traditional friendship with France, and the deep obligation of Bulgaria to Russia and Great Britain, caused the Allied Powers to regard the position with some complacency. The hostility of all the Balkan States to Turkey, and therefore to the Teuton Powers, was assumed, though it appears to have been recognized from the outset that Ferdinand would set a price, even upon his neutrality.

But Ferdinand was already committed to a scheme which promised him far more than he could expect from his French friends and their allies. The service demanded was no small one, for he had not only to appear in arms on behalf

of the Central Powers when the appointed time came, but before then he had to destroy the trust of the other Balkan States in the justice and the cause of the Entente Powers.

To this end it was necessary to retain the confidence of France, Great Britain, and the Powers allied to them. The task was no easy one, since his duplicity was a matter of notoriety; and he had need to preserve a very specious air to cover the real cunning of his plans. How far he went in his double dealing it is not yet possible to say; but it is certain that he must have gone to extreme lengths to win the confidence and trust of the Entente diplomatists in the face of the warnings that were showered upon them.

The demands he made as the price of his friendship were for concessions at the expense of his neighbours, Serbia and Greece. Serbia was to yield 6,000 square miles of that part of Thrace which was wrested from Turkey in the Balkan war. The demand was an unconscionable one, for in the territory he wanted was a considerable section of the railway that linked Belgrade to Salonica, and formed the only outlet that Serbia possessed to the sea. That link was to be entrusted to the acknowledged enemy of Serbia, the Czar of Bulgaria.

It is not very pleasant to reflect that Serbia was forced to consent to this demand by her

allies. The use made by Germans of the incident, and of the pressure that had to be applied to Serbia, was a very deft one. Rumania and Greece were told that they were mere pawns in the game, and that the Powers of the Entente would willingly sacrifice them to their own desire to retain the friendship of Bulgaria.

Greece was soon to have a practical illustration of the German argument, for Ferdinand, emboldened by his first diplomatic success, then demanded a strip of Greek territory on the Ægean, including the Greek seaport of Kavalla. Greece strenuously objected, but was told that she must give way and that it was only due to Bulgaria. "What did we tell you?" whispered the Germans in Greek ears, and were justified of their previous insinuations.

It has never been disclosed whether Ferdinand asked for instant delivery of this territory, or whether the compliance with his demands was followed on his part by the signing of a treaty with the Entente Powers. It would have been like the disregard Ferdinand had always shown for "scraps of paper" if he had committed Bulgaria to a pact which he had already broken when it was signed. For at this time, when by some means he had won the trust of the Entente Powers, he had actually entered into treaty obligations with their enemies.

Who can measure the duplicity of this man? It is certain that the trust reposed in him by both sides was very great, and that in the end he was certain to betray one or the other. That he had already chosen to betray the Entente is fairly certain, for already the expedition against the Dardanelles had been launched, and he well knew that its success would mean the total extinction of his long-cherished scheme for obtaining possession of Constantinople.

With Germany and Austria, on the other hand, he was dealing with Powers lavish of their promises. To them, and to Turkey also, a free passage through Bulgaria had now become vital. They were at a standstill in the western area of war, and their great effort against Russia was now expending itself. The only outlet offering was to the east and south, and to that outlet the assistance of Bulgaria was imperative. So Germany promised far more than the Entente Powers could give, and Ferdinand sold himself to the biggest bidder.

It was a dangerous game he played, for the success of the attempt on the Dardanelles would have made it impossible for him to carry out his arrangement with his friends the Huns. The failure of that enterprise, on the other hand, allowed him to break his obligations to the Entente Powers, after they had strained the

loyalty of Serbia, Greece and Rumania, in trying to meet his demands.

Such was the double treachery of which Ferdinand was guilty in 1914 and 1915. His treaties with the Teuton Powers appear to have been two. The first was made with Austria in 1913, when he pledged himself to common action against Serbia with that Power; and so, it may be, paved the way to the assassination of the heir-apparent to the Austrian throne. The other was made with Germany in July, 1915, when Ferdinand was guaranteed Thrace, and a strip of Greek territory along the Ægean, including the ports of Kavalla and Salonica.

In April of 1915 the Rumanian Minister at Sofia warned his government that the agreement had been made, and Rumania in its turn warned the Entente Powers. Later Greece warned the Entente of what was going on at least twice. In the face of these warnings, the Entente Powers continued to believe in Ferdinand. The Serbians, who knew his villany, and were certain that he was casting in his lot with their oppressors, wished to take the bull by the horns and attack Bulgaria while its powerful friends were fully occupied with Russia and on the western front. They were restrained by the Entente Powers; otherwise they would have altered the whole course of the war.

I repeat that the Entente must have had better assurance than mere protestations from Ferdinand to have trusted him so implicitly. His reputation and his past career were for any one to read; yet in face of all suspicious circumstances he was trusted. M. Joseph Reinach states that when the documents of the negotiations are published by the Entente Powers they will constitute a record in baseness and treachery. For my own part, I conceive that nothing less than a treaty signed by Ferdinand and his ministers will be brought forward in justification of the latitude that was allowed to him.

The mobilization of the Bulgarian army was finally ordered upon the flimsiest of pretexts, and its concentration upon the Serbian frontier, concurrently with the advance of the German and Austrians upon the doomed kingdom, follows inevitably. The rest is a matter of recent history, still an incomplete chapter in the story of the Great War.

One effect of Ferdinand's intervention was to unite Constantinople with Berlin, and to make the British evacuation of the peninsula of Gallipoli a necessity. Thus the Czar of Bulgaria was instrumental in striking the hardest blow at the prestige of the British arms that has been inflicted in the memory of living man. He effected it, not by prowess in the field, but by an act of

base and shameless treachery, which involved his turning his back upon all the nations which he had extolled as liberating influences, to which Bulgaria owed its very existence. It involved him in an alliance with Turkey, the Power against which he had been for a generation declaiming. But it was a shrewd blow nevertheless, and it will be the fault of Great Britain itself if the punishment for it is not conceived on a similar scale of magnitude.

It must not be supposed that Ferdinand stood alone in Bulgaria in this act of dissimulation and treachery. He acted in connivance with a ministry which represented a very powerful pro-Hun section of Bulgarian opinion. For by this time a large section of Bulgaria, embittered by the reverse of the second Balkan war, had renounced its Slavonic sympathies, and had openly pronounced for the Kultur of the Kaiser and his generals and professors.

KULTUR IN BULGARIA

" *A heroic struggle is being played out before us; the healthy and mighty German Kultur is fighting the rotten French Culture which, being sentenced to death, endeavours to induce all the other nations of Europe to join her.*"—DR. PETROFF, OF THE BULGARIAN UNIVERSITY.

CHAPTER XXIV

KULTUR IN BULGARIA

THE tragedy of the second Balkan war had bitten deep into the hearts of most Bulgarians. As I have already related, the terrible disaster which that war brought upon Bulgaria produced a controversy which only died down when the Bulgarian Army was once more mobilized to fight for the Turk against the nation which liberated Bulgaria from Turkish bondage.

In the course of that controversy the argument was elaborated that by the Treaty of Bucarest Bulgaria had liquidated its old debt to Russia, and was free to turn and rend its whilom benefactor upon the first favourable occasion. As Nikoff, one of the foremost controversialists, put it:

"In 1878 Russia liberated 3,000,000 of our population after having shed the blood of 150,000 of her sons. In the year 1913 Bulgaria liberated, at great sacrifices also, 3,000,000 of her population

in Macedonia and Thrace, which Russia took and distributed among her new protégés, Rumania, Serbia and Greece. And to-day Bulgaria and Russia are quits. We have paid all our debt to Russia. To-day we can say: We have secured our own liberty by our own arms."

The argument is an ingenious one, but it quite overlooks the point that the Bulgarian Czar, and not Russia, was the instrument of Bulgaria's undoing. But the Bulgarians desired to free themselves not only from the obligation for their liberty, but from the claims of kinship with Russia. And here German Kultur came to their aid by an elaborate demonstration that they were not Slavs at all, but a predominant semi-Teutonic and Tartar race which had organized the meek Slavs of 500 years ago into a victorious nation, and had persisted long after the Slav race that lived with them had perished.

For Slav unity this new Bulgarian school therefore proposed to substitute the theory of German Kultur. As Dr. Ghenadieff writes, "Slavism is a fatal barrier to our national power and enthusiasm. It is high time that we emerge from that error and discontinue preaching that falsehood."

And Dr. Petroff, of the Bulgarian University, writes, "At this moment the culturally degenerated and outcast France has, in her struggle against

the powerful German Kultur, barbaric and idiotic Russia for her ally."

And the most celebrated of Bulgarian poets, the Tartaro-Bulgar Kyril Christoff, sings a song of vengeance against Ferdinand's France—

When—after our deeds—envy gathered
Five enemies before our doors;
When, one after another, the enemies plundered us,
And the sacred deed was reduced to ashes—
Soulless and sold, O France, thou wast the first
To caluminate our martyred people!
Before our pain thy heart was not moved—
But thou didst spit in the face of the Crucifix!

Such a state of mind, of course, was diligently fostered in Bulgaria by Austrians and Germans alike. Soon there were accounts from credible sources of the massing in Bulgaria of huge stores of German munitions, and even of German uniforms. Some of these munitions were undoubtedly intended for the beleaguered Turk, and Bulgaria became notorious for the ease with which these warlike stores could be smuggled through a neutral country. Indeed, so openly was the passage made that the word smuggled is wildly inappropriate.

At this period Bulgaria entertained a new guest, Prince Henry of Reuss. He had not always been as friendly to his brother-in-law, the Czar of Bulgaria, as that potentate considered compatible with his own dignity and peculiar merits.

But now he had to complain of no lack of friendliness on the part of the Lutheran Prince, or of his royal master who had dispatched him to Sofia.

The Germans at this period were good customers of Bulgaria. The wheat crop had been a bountiful one, and never had the Bulgarian farmers received such prices for their harvest. They found that a European war spelled prosperity for them, though there were signs that the garnering of the wheat would be followed by one of those grim harvests with which Bulgaria has recently been only too familiar.

Then German officers appeared in the streets of Sofia in increasing numbers. They were discernible everywhere, though they made as little display as possible of their uniforms; and when a German officer appears in civil garb there must be some deep reason for the self-denial.

The other signs of German Kultur in Bulgaria were the persistent anti-Russian campaigns carried on by the chief newspapers, especially the Government organs.

"If our national duty demands that we should join ourselves to the enemies of the Russian policy," wrote Dr. Ghenadieff, "it would be criminal and treasonable were we to hesitate to do so because of a souvenir of our liberation, or if, following the example of the Bohemians, Poles, Croatians, and other pure-blooded Slavs, we

delayed too long before turning our arms against the Russians. . . . May an end be finally put to the question of Bulgarian gratitude to Russia."

Thus the corruption of Bulgaria went on. German money, German officers, and German arms were poured into the country. The sufferings of Poland, devastated as the result of its fidelity to Russia, were magnified in the Bulgarian Press, and the moral for Bulgarians was emphasized with daily increasing vehemence.

Ferdinand's part in these proceedings was a characteristic one. He undertook to conceal from the Powers of the Entente the treachery that was preparing, and of which he was the chief instigator. At this period—the middle of August, 1915—he wrote to a correspondent in Paris, through his political secretary Dobrovitch:—

"The Russians have recently sustained serious defeats, but I am not of opinion that these will affect the general situation. They now require time to recuperate, and then, I hope, they will be able to resume the offensive.

"Bulgaria maintains its neutrality. Will it continue to do so? I think not. But in any case Bulgaria will not move until Greece and Rumania have done so. The catastrophes of the last war have taught us to be prudent, and not to trust to promises.

"I have conveyed your messages to His Majesty

the King, who has been much touched by them, and has charged me to convey his appreciation."

That letter was written a month after the treaty with Germany had been signed. In the middle of July the French Minister at Sofia was secretly informed that Ferdinand had gone on a visit to Berlin. He at once attempted to get into touch with the King, and was informed that he was not very well, and was resting at his Vrana estate. He made persistent attempts to communicate with Ferdinand by telephone, a method always possible when Ferdinand was professing to be more French than the French themselves. His every attempt was met with the reply that His Majesty was indisposed and could not answer the calls.

Photographs have since been obtained which prove beyond all doubt that Ferdinand was at that time in Berlin, where he had gone to confirm with the Kaiser the hard and fast arrangement which had been effected through the agency of the Prince of Reuss.

And now the German officers swarmed openly in the streets of Sofia and took up their quarters at the Bulgarian war office. The meaning of the signs and portents could not be mistaken by anybody but a simpleton. It was common knowledge throughout Bulgaria that their Czar was about to throw in his lot with the Huns.

FERDINAND AND THE FARMER

"*It is a policy which will compromise your own dynasty, and may cost you your head.*"—STAMBULIVSKI, A BULGARIAN FARMER.

CHAPTER XXV

FERDINAND AND THE FARMER

BEFORE finally and openly declaring himself on the side of the Huns, Ferdinand was forced to receive a deputation consisting of five of the most powerful men in Bulgaria. They were the leaders of five of the ten parties which divide Bulgarian politics: namely Gueschoff (Nationalists), Daneff (Progressive Liberals), Malinoff (Democrats), Zanoff (Radicals), and Stambulivski (Country Party). They had come to warn him that Bulgaria was opposed to his policy of active intervention with the Central Powers, and minced no words in fulfilling their task. They made it abundantly plain that at least half of Bulgaria was opposed to his action, and that he would suffer such consequences as he had always dreaded since his arrival in Bulgaria if he persisted in his folly.

The ball was opened by Malinoff, who was

Prime Minister of Bulgaria at the time when Ferdinand declared himself Czar.

"The policy being conducted by the Government," he said, "is a policy of adventure which tends to throw Bulgaria into the arms of Germany, either spurring her to an attack on Serbia or else forcing upon her a neutrality which is desired by Germany. This policy is contrary to the sentiments and the interests of the country, and if the Government continues along these lines the disturbances which it will provoke will be very serious. For these reasons, after having appealed to the Government in vain, we request Your Majesty to call the Chamber together immediately, and we further ask that a Coalition be called to guarantee the country against any rash adventure."

The King listened in silence and made no reply. Then with a nod he invited Stambulivski to speak. The head of the Agrarian party, a rough and haughty man, very popular with the masses of the Bulgarian peasants from whom he has sprung, and who has only recently set aside the peasant's costume for the dress of the citizen, rose and addressed the King with vigour:—

"In the name of the workers in the fields of Bulgaria I wish to add to the words of my colleague, Malinoff, that the Bulgarians hold you personally responsible, rather than your Govern-

ment, for the disastrous adventure of 1913. If a similar adventure were to be repeated the catastrophe would this time be beyond remedy. Again the responsibility would lie with your policy, which is contrary to the well-being of the country, and the country would not fail to call you to account in person. In order to make it quite clear what is the wish of your country I present in writing to Your Majesty its exact expression."

Next came Zanoff, the uncompromising Radical, who said, "I had sworn I would never set foot in your palace. If I have come to-day it is because the interests of the country, higher than my private principles, have obliged me to do so. What I have to say Your Majesty can read in this paper which I present in the name of my party." He then presented a memorandum similar in content to that of the Agrarians. The King read this too and continued to keep silent.

Gueschoff, Prime Minister during the first Balkan war, followed:—

"Your Majesty, I, too, declare myself to be fully in agreement with what Stambulivski has already said. However hard his words may have seemed, they nevertheless express in their simple, uncultivated frankness, unacquainted with the formalities of etiquette, our common thoughts. We, all of us representatives of the Opposition, consider the present policy contrary to the senti-

ments and interests of the country, for, by spurring it on to make common cause with Germany, it brings it into hostility with mighty Russia, who was our liberator, and the adventure into which the country will be hurled will cost it its future. We disapprove in the most absolute manner of this policy, and we, too, request that the Sobranje be summoned and that a Ministry may be formed having the co-operation of all parties."

Dr. Daneff, who succeeded Gueschoff, but resigned when the attack on Serbia and Greece failed, spoke in the same strain.

Having heard them all the King replied :—

"I have listened to your threatenings, and I will refer them to the Prime Minister, that he may take cognizance of them and know what to decide."

There was an awkward pause, which Ferdinand attempted to fill by passing some remarks about the crops to Stambulivski. But the attention of the giant farmer was riveted on something more than agriculture.

"This," he said, "is not the moment to talk of these things. I say again to Your Majesty, that the country will not have a policy of adventure such as cost it so dear in 1913. This policy is, moreover, yours. Before 1913 we believed you a great diplomatist, but we have seen what your diplomacy brought us. You have taken advan-

tage of all the holes in the Constitution to get the direction of the country in your own hands. Your ministers count for nothing ; you alone are the author of this policy, and you alone will have the responsibility of it."

"The policy I have decided to follow," the King frigidly replied, "is the one which I consider the best and the most advantageous for the country."

"It is a policy which can only lead to disaster," replied the farmer, "which will bring about new catastrophes, and will compromise not only the future of the country, but of your own dynasty, and which may cost you your head !"

The King measured with his eyes this countryman who spoke such weighty words.

"Do not trouble yourself about my head. It is an old one. Rather think of your own," said the King, with the shadow of a scornful smile, as he moved away.

But Stambulivski replied : "My head matters little, sire ; I am only thinking of the country's."

But Ferdinand chose to disregard the warning. His choice was already made, and a few days later he was figuring before the world once more in the uncongenial guise of Ferdinand the War Lord.

FERDINAND AS WAR LORD

" *Your Majesty's nation in arms, under the guidance of its illustrious War Lord, has added one sublime leaf of glory to another in the history of Bulgaria.*"—THE KAISER.

CHAPTER XXVI

FERDINAND AS WAR LORD

THE world has recently been treated to the sublime spectacle of a meeting of the Shoddy Czar and the Bloodstained Kaiser at Nish, the ancient capital of down-trodden Serbia, where the two monarchs, united only by the nefarious nature of the enterprise in which they are engaged, exchanged compliments of a dangerous irony. It was characteristic of Ferdinand that he should veil his impudent jibe under the screen of a dead language, and refer to his partner in crime as " Victor et gloriosus," which, if it means anything, signifies, " Conqueror and braggart."

The Kaiser, for his part, stooped to no such refinement of sarcasm. He made Ferdinand a field-marshal of the German Army, referring to the " glorious triumphal march of his nation, under its illustrious War Lord." In conferring his new

rank upon Ferdinand he said, "I am, with my army, happy that you, by accepting it, have become 'One of us.'"

The brutal irony of Wilhelm II was probably accepted by crafty Ferdinand as one more added to the long list of insults he has received at the Kaiser's hands. The Czar of Bulgaria has had all sorts of good qualities claimed for him by his admirers, but the most servile of his flatterers has never ventured to claim that he has anything of the soldier in him. That he neglected the common employment of the youth of his time and his class for the fascination of the study of nature, and that military matters roused in him the deepest aversion, is conceded by friend and foe alike.

He has never been able to understand the elements of military theory or practice, and as Stambuloff pointed out in the Press interview which gave him so much offence, he was incapable of understanding his Minister for War. Add to that the fact that he is a timorous man, and the whole force of irony contained in the apparent fulsomeness of the Kaiser's words can be grasped.

His own Commander-in-Chief, the great General Savoff, summed up his military qualifications in an interview shortly after the conclusion of the Treaty of Bucarest, that is a standing testimonial to the Bulgarian Czar's soldier-like qualities.

"What can you do," groaned the Bulgarian

soldier, "with a man who always lives in bodily fear—fear of assassination, fear of disease, fear of accident? You cannot think what a job it was to keep up our troops' enthusiasm for a king who dare not look upon a wounded soldier, who can never be persuaded to go within a mile of a hospital, who trembles at the sound of the guns, and hides himself in a railway carriage, in which he flits from place to place, always keeping as far as possible from the front."

This short and forcible summary of Ferdinand's behaviour in time of war is only at fault since it falls short of the actual details of his supreme cowardice. No greater physical coward has existed in modern times. Fear lives with him always; it is a disease rather than a frame of mind which stern resolution might overcome. He is sick at the sight of shed blood, he can no more help trembling at the sound of the cannon than a timid young girl.

One of my most vivid recollections of him is of a struggle with this craven fear which took place in the sight of a very considerable crowd. It happened curiously enough at Brussels, where I saw him in 1910. He was then, as always, most interested in aviation, and in a weak moment had engaged to make a flight with the Belgian pilot Delamines. Up to that time no king had ever ascended in an aeroplane, and Ferdinand

was probably impelled to make his rash engagement by his desire to be the first monarch to fly.

But when the time came for him to enter the machine, he was possessed by nothing but fear. One could only sympathize with him, so pitiable a spectacle was he in his terror. His face was livid, and his thin lips were ashen grey. His jaunty walk had completely gone, and he tottered to his seat as though he were going to the gallows.

With a supreme effort he gasped, "I am too fat to fly, but let us fly nevertheless." It did not sound jocular, but pathetic. But he was in for it, and was strapped to his seat. There was a cheer when the aeroplane rose, and the Czar of Bulgaria, with eyes tightly shut, soared off. Two circuits of the aerodrome he made and then descended to earth more dead than alive. A flask was offered him as he dismounted, and with unaffected joy he drained it, and the colour came back to his cheeks. The reaction set in, and he was sprightly in his satisfaction at the feat he had accomplished.

Nothing could have been more evident of his will to do bold things, and of the craven fear that held him back from his wish. It is not surprising, therefore, to find that he placed himself at the head of his army on the outbreak of the Balkan war, and sallied forth against the Turks determined to do or die. The very first sight of a wounded Bulgarian soldier killed all the martial fervour in



The first King to fly. Ferdinand with Delamines, at Brussels, in 1910.

'The Da'y M.

him, and thenceforward, like the Duke of Plaza Toro,

> He led his regiments from behind,
> He found it less exciting.

The stories of his prowess as Commander-in-Chief of the Bulgarian Army reveal him as a pitiful mixture of craven cowardice and arrogant self-sufficiency. He hovered continually on the fringe of the field of action in his luxurious train, and exercised a restraining influence on the enterprise of his generals and on the courage of his troops. His tongue was forever dripping cant phrases about humanity, he was all composed of compunction as timorous as it was base. But he never lost sight of his one object in waging war; everything was subordinated to his overwhelming desire to enter Constantinople at the head of a victorious army.

The first Balkan war was begun as a war of liberation. In a few months Ferdinand had converted it into a war of conquest. His punishment was reaped in the result, for those operations that might reasonably be ascribed to a desire to rescue the Balkan Christians from the Turkish yoke were crowned with success; while his attempts at conquest ended in a humiliating reverse.

The climax of his unworthy terrors came when

the Bulgarians were encamped opposite the Turks at Chatalja, and the uncleanliness and neglect of both armies resulted in a visitation of cholera. Before that scourge Ferdinand fled, still insisting on maintaining control of the operations. But he would receive no message from the infected camp, and adopted precautions that made the lips of his very toadies curl with scorn. His timorous precautions prevented his generals from capturing Adrianople months before that stronghold really fell, while his explanation that he wished to avoid unnecessary bloodshed deceived no one. During all this fighting he had to bear the contrast afforded by his heir, who, to do him justice, bore his part in the war as became a prince and the heir to a throne.

His experience at the siege of Adrianople afforded him the luxury of a new terror. At that siege, as the history of warfare will tell, bombs were for the first time dropped from aeroplanes upon troops and buildings beneath. The practice appealed to Ferdinand's lively imagination, and struck a new terror into his cowardly soul. He lived in daily dread of an attack from the sky, for the elaborate precautions he took to avoid any contact with King Death did not cover the risk of death from above.

The sequel was witnessed when Ferdinand and his Bulgars arrayed themselves in the Great War

on the side of the Teuton Powers and on that of Bulgaria's hereditary enemy, Turkey. The haunting dread of an aeroplane raid upon Sofia was with him night and day. He lost no time in appealing to the Germans for a Zeppelin to aid the Bulgarian operations, and his request was granted.

In due course the great airship arrived at Sofia, and its commander requested from the Czar that he should be given instructions as to what part of the battle front he should visit. The reply was that for the present he should remain where he was for the protection of Sofia, that is, Czar Ferdinand, from the dangers of an air raid. It is pleasant to reflect that the French aeroplanes came, nevertheless, and did no little damage to Ferdinand's capital. Some day, perhaps, we shall know how the Czar comported himself during their visit.

Such, then, is the military prowess of the man whom the Kaiser jeeringly termed "an illustrious War Lord." Not even Ferdinand himself, with all his marvellous self-sufficiency, could miss the point of that arrogant sneer. And Ferdinand is a Bourbon, who "remembers nothing and forgets nothing." It will be strange if the mighty War Lord does not one day repent him of jesting so open and ill-timed.

FERDINAND IN EXTREMIS

"*I am, with my army, happy that you have become* ONE *of* US."—THE KAISER.

CHAPTER XXVII

FERDINAND IN EXTREMIS

THE entry of the Bulgarians into the Great War was sudden, fierce and effective. They threw themselves with characteristic ardour upon the Serbians, who, attacked from three quarters at once, defended themselves sternly. They could not expect to prevail against the overwhelming odds against them, but they took heavy toll of their oppressors, and especially of their detested foes the Bulgarians.

The expedition of the Allied Powers from Salonica came too late to save Serbia, or even appreciably to delay her downfall. Once again the principal fighting against the French and British troops, who had advanced from Salonica in the hope of saving the railway to Nish, was done by the Bulgarians. They were as reckless as they were barbarous in their fighting, and though they drove the Allies back, they lost out of all proportion to the damage they inflicted.

Thus in a very few weeks the Bulgarians had gained possession of the coveted portion of Thrace and Macedonia held by the Serbians, and were brought to a pause on the Greek frontier. In all this fighting, needless to say, Ferdinand had taken no part, except to issue some of those vainglorious proclamations of which samples have been quoted in previous chapters.

With the Serbians utterly crushed and the Greeks quaking before the fear of an invasion and of the Allied forces encamped at Salonica, a period was reached in the Bulgarian operations. Sofia was converted into a city of mourning, and death was spread through all the Bulgarian villages. For the third time in a few years the young men of the country had been decimated.

In the meantime the Germans had converted Sofia into a Prussian barrack town. There was no longer any concealment; it was only too apparent to the Bulgarians that the Schwaba had come to stay. The Bulgarian troops on the Greek frontier had been equipped with German uniforms and German arms in preparation for the invasion of Greece, the excuse being that Bulgaria was experiencing a shortage in such equipment.

The Bulgarians also shared the booty of the Serbian cities and farms, the goods and stock of the conquered Serbians being removed after

the thorough and scientific method employed in the sacking of Belgium. But there was already a great scarcity of food in Bulgaria, where the German methods of conservation of supplies by rationing were quickly introduced.

Already Bulgaria was paying the penalty for interference against her old friends and benefactors. There were deep murmurs everywhere at the Teutonizing of the country, at the rations of black bread issued only to ticket-holders, and at the arrogance of the all-pervading Germans.

Very unwillingly the Bulgars looked forward to the time when they should be called upon to attack the allied armies in their strong position at Salonica, and perhaps to force Greece into hostility. That was not the direction in which they wished to make their next advance, for their ill-chosen friends the Turks were the victims of their preference in this respect. Ferdinand was again in a difficult position with the people whom he had adopted, and must go to his new friends for help.

He got it in the shape of plentiful German and Austrian honours. He received the hall-mark of Hundom in September, 1915, when, apropos of nothing at all, the Kaiser conferred the Iron Cross upon him. But now he was to be made a field-marshal in both the German and Austrian armies, and to entertain

the Kaiser at a memorable banquet in the conquered city of Nish.

A remarkable description of that ceremonious meeting has been published by a journalist who had the hardihood to obtain entry, and depicts the Kaiser as an aged and broken man, coughing continually, and looking small and almost pitiful by the side of the burly Ferdinand. In terms of fulsome insincerity Ferdinand greeted him.

"The world has learned to know with surprise and admiration the strength of Germany and her allies, and believes in the invincibility of the German Army under the guidance and leadership of its Kaiser.

"I hope that the year 1916 may bring lasting peace, the sacred fruits of our victories, a peace which will allow my people to co-operate in future in the work of Kultur; but, if fate should impose a continuation of the war, then my people in arms will be ready to do its duty to the last.

"Ave Imperator, Cæsar et Rex. Victor et Gloriosus es. Nissa antiqua omnes Orientis populi te salutant redemptorem ferentem oppressis prosperitatem atque salutem."

Long live Kaiser Wilhelm!

(Hail Emperor, Cæsar and King. Thou art victor and glorious [Gloriosus really means braggart]. In ancient Nish all the peoples of the east

salute thee, the redeemer, bringing prosperity and salvation to the oppressed.)

The Kaiser's reply was couched in the same strain, and laid special emphasis upon the fact that the honours conferred by Germany and Austria upon Ferdinand had made him "One of Us."

No phrase could have been more expressive. Ferdinand had become, for the time being, a minor German Prince. He had given over his adopted people to the German yoke, and Bulgaria had become as much part of Germany as Bavaria or Saxony. That, and nothing less, was the outcome of a willing treachery that was prompted by wild dreams of self-aggrandisement that are doomed never to see fulfilment.

And there, for the present, Ferdinand of Bulgaria must be left.

It is difficult to harmonize his present position with the ambitions that have principally made his life and career remarkable. Those ambitions could only be realized by the extinction of the Ottoman Power in Europe. He has taken up arms against the forces which are pledged to bring about that consummation. He has linked himself in arms with the Power he has planned throughout a long reign to despoil. The path before him is a very obscure and tortuous one even for the Shoddy Czar, whose word is as

valueless as his signature to a solemn pledge.

What inducement can he advance to his people to continue this war, from which they have nothing more to gain, and which has already involved them in such heavy loss of life? There can be no other inducement than the strong constraint imposed by the German forces who have taken possession of the Balkans. It is dangerous to prophesy with a man so elusive as Ferdinand, but he appears now to be on the threshold of the most difficult stage in his career. He has strong enemies within his own State, and will have to encounter the most bitter opposition from the open enemies arrayed in arms against him.

Some, at least, of his friends are palpably lukewarm. No genuine tie could possibly link Turkey with Bulgaria. On the other hand, the just anger of his enemies is a common motive to ensure his thorough and lasting punishment. His people may hope, by a timely repentance, to escape the consequence of their cowardly transgressions; but not so Ferdinand. He is the supreme offender, and must pay the maximum penalty.

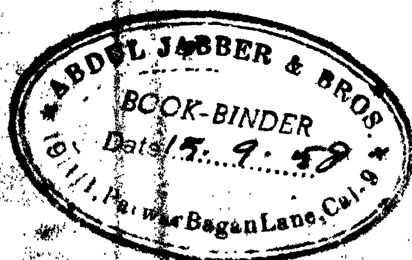
It was not to end in such an *impasse* that his mother instructed him in the mysteries of king-craft, and advised him throughout his early years of insecurity in Bulgaria. Had she lived,

he might have chosen differently, for Clementine, daughter of France as she was, could never have endured the supremacy of German influence which Ferdinand's policy has brought about. It may well be that her death was the turning-point in his career, the beginning of a downward march on which one well-defined stage has already been marked, the reverse of the second Balkan war.

For many years the influence of the Shoddy Czar has been a malign one. His character, his training, his ideals, and the barbarism of the people he governs have made Bulgaria a lasting threat to the peace of Europe. One of the many good results we may hope to derive from the war will be the disappearance from the realm of international politics of so unscrupulous and autocratic a ruler as Ferdinand of Bulgaria.

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